

# W O M E N

AS

THEY ARE.

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A NOVEL,

IN FOUR VOLUMES,

BY MRS. PARSONS,

AUTHOR OF MYSTERIOUS WARNINGS, &c.

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VOL. III.

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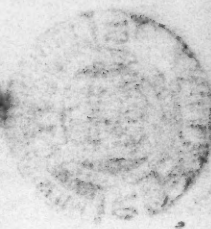
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PRINTED FOR ALPHIN LANE  
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AUTHOR OF MYSTICISM, &c.

BY THE REV. DR. J. H. W.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOLUME I.

THE NEW

WOMEN

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## WOMEN AS THEY ARE.

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### LETTER I.

MISS BOYLE TO THE COUNTESS OF  
STANTON.

TWO of your letters are before me, my dear sister. The first gave me so much real concern, that I knew not in what words to address you, that might convey my entire disapprobation of your conduct; yet in terms that might be received as the re-monfrances of an affectionate sister, rather

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than a rigid observer, or a severe monitor. Is it possible my dear Caroline can have stooped to the meanness of duplicity and contrivances to carry points equally against decorum, the respect due to her lord, and her own character! It is now, indeed, I tremble for you:—artifice and dissimulation are such odious defects in the heart, as no beauty nor accomplishments can cover in the eyes of discernment.

The veil of hypocrisy is but a flimsy one, which chance every hour may withdraw, and cover you with confusion. Who would take the *trouble* to *assume* virtues, when the reality may be practised with pleasure and reputation?

My dear Lady Stanton, you have sense, wit, and good-nature,—add but judgment and prudence,—have but that proper pride which makes us superior to mean or ungenerous actions, and how *proud* should I be of my sister!

What





What must my father think when I not only retire to read your letters, but am at a loss to repeat their contents to him?—He is so delicate to make inquiries, but I feel hurt at my apparent want of confidence, and confused, as if I also were guilty of duplicity.

Indeed your conduct is indefensible.—Lord Stanton deserves better treatment from his wife; he merits her whole heart, an unreserved confidence, and a wish and endeavour to make him happy. You have a plain and pleasant path before you to earthly felicity; why then, my dear Caroline, do you step out of the road to plunge into crooked ways, that must terminate in disgrace and misery?

Yesterday was my birth-day, when I entered into my one and twentieth year,—what you used to call a matronly age. My father would have a small party (our good Mr. Ross, and Mr. and Miss Gordon) to

B 2

dine

dine with us: "he would stretch a point on his Mary's natal day," beyond our usual economical plan. I felt the compliment, and endeavoured by uncommon spirits to shew my gratitude. In the middle of dinner, your packet was delivered. "A letter from my sister!"

"She has well timed it to congratulate you, and add to the general joy."

Such was our father's kind observation, but I confess to you, my conclusion was not quite so favourable, and I would not venture to inspect the contents till I retired for the evening:—the consequence of perusing it was a sleepless night.

You are indeed "giddy with admiration," and I could almost say contemptible from vanity;—forgive the expression. I could not love you if I were blind to your faults, or neglected to point them out. Perhaps you may think your confidence should preclude censure. No, my dear sister, it is an aggravation. Temptation, opportunity,

volatile spirits, company, and gaiety, may sometimes draw us into little follies and levities we blush for on recollection; but that mind must act deliberately wrong that can commit those follies to paper, and exult in a conduct so very reprehensible.

It is this that alarms me. The gaiety of the moment might lead you into improprieties, which, in confidence, you acknowledge and repent of; then the recollection entitles you to credit; but, to repeat words and actions unworthy of your character, as matters for triumph, stamps them as the follies of a depraved mind.

O Caroline, my dear sister! if you would avoid confusion and disgrace, be candid, generous, and prudent; return the warm affection with which Lord Stanton honours you,—with love and gratitude. Be what you *seem*,—a woman of character and honour: the honour of your husband and his family is placed in your hands, a sacred trust,

B 3



trust, which you vowed at the altar should be inviolable !

You will be offended again, and ask, "What crimes have you committed?"—I trust *none* ; God forbid I should for a moment think otherwise.—But there are many things wounding to a husband's peace, many trifling occurrences that degrade his character, and lessen your own respectability, that may not be stigmatized as crimes, but which often prove the grave of his esteem and affection, and throw irreparable censure and contempt on you.

It is from trifles originate all the follies and vices of the world. Nobody at *first* plunges boldly into vice ; there are gradations, which if not carefully attended to,—foibles, which, if often repeated and indulged, imperceptibly increase, steal on the senses, and by degrees are looked upon without concern. The heart deceives itself, and at length, unnoticed, relaxes in the practice

tice of virtue, considers its follies as countenanced by hundreds, and in that fatal delusive error, sinks gradually into vice, when the predominant passion of the soul is to be gratified.

Vanity, the bane of every female virtue, the prompter to every disgraceful action! how contemptible is that being who sacrifices her character, her respectability, and self-approbation, to the poor praise of personal accomplishment,—to the glare of dress, to the superb carriage; who associates with persons void of integrity and honour, merely to enjoy the empty praise of a few flatterers, the temporary respect outward and accidental circumstances exact from their poor dependents, and who the discriminating world view with scorn and derision!

Alas! my sister, it is not the adulation of those men, attracted by your personal charms, that should gratify your pride or self-consequence; it is that homage which

virtue and talents, discretion and honour, *demands*, and seldom fails of *obtaining*, from the judicious and discerning part of mankind; it is the true respect, and not the "rattling tongue of saucy eloquence," not the torrent of nothings uttered with volubility and confidence, that ought to afford real gratification to a sensible mind, whether male or female.

But the persons who can value themselves upon the notice they attract by conduct and circumstances they ought to blush for, must be sunk beneath pity or regard, and held in contempt and abhorrence.

Let me beseech you, my dearest sister, to stifle that paltry vanity which at present misleads you. Be admired and respected as the estimable wife of Lord Stanton, not merely as a beautiful woman. Decline a particular intimacy with Sir James Nichols, or any other man: do not *blush* to be seen with your husband; and, if you are the "idol of the day, the object of universal admiration,"



admiration," seize the favourable moment to bring virtue into fashion ; be an object of respect and adoration, a pattern of discretion for handsome women, and an example for admired wives.—Then, indeed, you might be justified in being proud, then exult in the power of your attractions, and obtain that fame for your amiable qualities which envy and detraction might deny to obtrusive beauty.

In this obscure corner, I am equally free from admiration or neglect. The very few persons I know consider me merely as a quiet well-behaved young woman, and a *good daughter* ;—there is my vulnerable side. To deserve and obtain *that character* is the height of my ambition ; foibles I have many, but, whilst my dear father smiles with approbation on his Mary, I study to repress them,—to guard against the delusions of my own heart, and to enjoy the delightful consciousness that I contribute to his peace.

DO WOMEN AS THEY ARE.

My young companion, Miss Gordon, is truly amiable,—her mother good and respectable. Mr. Rofs I love and admire, but he is fixed in sober widowhood, stealing gently to his grave, beloved and respected, and with a self-approving conscience. May the decline of *my* life possess the same humble confidence in Almighty Goodness!

Our dear father has more tranquil spirits, and *seems* to enjoy tolerable health; but he grows thin, and of late I think his appetite fails him, but he jests at my observation, and assures me “he does very well.” Why have you not written to him? — Merely a remembrance in my letter is not enough for *such a father*. I know it would give him much pleasure if you *were* to write, though he is too kind to be displeased at your neglect.

And now, my dear Caroline, having alarmed my fears and broken my rest by your two last letters, let me hope that you will

give the contents of this a serious perusal.—  
Add to my deficiencies such reflections as  
your own good sense must point out, in the  
hour of retirement, and then I trust the  
next packet I receive will be productive of  
as many joyful emotions as I have felt painful  
sensations. In that confidence I subscribe  
myself

Your truly affectionate sister,

And sincere friend,

MARY BOYLE.

Our father's best affections attend you and  
Lord Stanton, with my affectionate respects.  
I begin to esteem Almeria, and love Miss  
Penrickard, and shall soon thank the latter  
for her letter. We heard last week from  
Frederic; he is *well*, and *well* pleased.

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LETTER II.

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MISS BOYLE TO MRS. ROWE.

**Y**OUR very kind letter,\* my dear friend, has given me the highest pleasure.— Nothing is so soothing to the mind as the approbation of those we love: it is then we may be proud, without the imputation of vanity; proud of obtaining the favourable judgment of our friends. I shall now go back to my memorandums, as you kindly interest yourself for my friends, and I have many things to relate.

Nothing

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\* This letter does not appear.

Nothing particular occurred until Mr. Rofs received a letter from Lady Grange, the sister of poor Morgan, to whom his fortune devolved. She very politely thanked him for the trouble he had taken, and requested he would add to his kindness, by ordering an undertaker to make every necessary arrangement to convey the corpse to Berwick, where, on being informed of the time it might arrive there, some of her own people should meet it.

She apologized for this additional intrusion on his kindness, and requested he would accept the inclosed trifle (a draft for fifty pounds) to reimburse himself for the expenses incurred, and for a ring in remembrance of her brother.

Mr. Rofs seemed very inclined to have returned the draft, which is on a bank at Edinburgh, but we all persuaded him to the contrary; the present was trifling from the circumstances of the donor, and a mark of respect he ought not to refuse, since the lady

lady must be ever greatly his debtor for attentions of humanity, which no money could repay. It was with difficulty we prevailed on him to keep it. Two days after the funeral procession left Elgin.

They were obliged to send to Inverness for an undertaker, and all possible dispatch was used. I really felt as if a great weight had been removed from my mind, for I own to you I have often lamented the effects of my curiosity, though I was blameless as to the event.

Poor man ! pity he certainly demands. — Corrupted by prosperity, perverted by examples but too frequent, — accustomed to indulge his passions, how swift is the progress of vice ! Seduction and adultery were softened into love and gallantry, and, but for the unhappy and uncommon fate of the injured Gordon and his wife, perhaps years would have rolled on in the commission of fresh crimes, and he might have been cut off suddenly in the midst of them.

Let



Let us hope years of suffering and sorrow may have expiated for the terrible evils lawless and unrestrained passions produced, and that repentance,—a long and sincere repentance, may have deserved pardon!

The people of Elgin were led to believe the deceased was a chance-traveller, that curiosity had led to the castle, and was accidentally killed by the fall of some fragments;

This unfortunate business has disconcerted all our little parties for a time; but now we again begin to breathe freely, and take our walks as usual, only that the castle is entirely given up. We shall never enter that building more, nor even on that side of the mount; our rambles are chiefly towards the river, and some distant high grounds. When Mrs. Gordon had communicated the highly valued letter to Mr. Ross and my father, they expressed themselves very much delighted with the contents,

tents, and the young man's duteous behaviour.

The ladies are quite different beings.—Miss Gordon is as cheerful as a May morning. Mrs. Gordon now makes the effort to be so; a temporary gaiety now and then breaks through the cloud of melancholy, so fastened on her features, and seated in her mind, that you see it is her wish to *appear* otherwise from a conviction that gratitude to heaven should make her resigned and cheerful; she struggles therefore to remember the good and forget the evil, and I trust those efforts will be less painful every day.

Yesterday morning Miss Gordon and myself were seated on the banks of the river, She was knotting: I had taken out a volume of Shakespeare, and was reading *Coriolanus*. The barking of a little dog, belonging to my friend, made me turn my head. An elegant-looking man, not often seen in this neighbourhood, passed slowly  
on,

on, and bowed respectfully. We returned the salute, but thought it most prudent to walk home, which we did, full of conjectures who this gentleman should be.

“Some prince in disguise, (said I, smiling,) whom fame of our peerless charms has brought from afar to offer his devours.”

“Rather say, (returned Miss Gordon,) some hapless knight, some love-lorn swain, who has fled to the extremity of the kingdom to bewail his lost peace.”

Thus chatting and laughing, we returned to the cottage, not a little curious about this stranger, who, from the transient view we had of him, appeared to have the air of a man of fashion, with a very pleasing person.

In the evening, Mr. Rofs came to us.— We had expected him early in the afternoon, and began to upbraid him for his neglect.

“Spare



"Spare me, my young friends, (said the good man ;) I have been detained by a visitor."

"A visitor !" we both exclaimed, and the stranger darted into my mind.

"Yes, a gentleman, who is making the tour of Scotland for pleasure and information; not flying through the country like a man eager to perform a journey, nor yet scrutinizing with a morose and prejudiced eye. He speaks sensibly and liberally of what he has seen, and intends staying here a few days to view the cathedral, castle, and its environs."

Miss Gordon smiled on me : he observed it, and went on with a significant nod, "The good man at the inn, who supposed every body must like to see the minister, told him, it seems, that I was fond of, and hospitable to strangers; so, without any other recommendation, he came, and announced himself as a Mr. Spencer, who was travelling for information, and would be thankful if

I would

I would permit him to draw on me for a little knowledge of this part of the country, during two or three days that he should remain here. So you see, my good ladies, I had not the power rudely to turn a civil stranger out of doors. I find he arrived here last evening. Who or what he is I know not : he has the appearance of a gentleman, and has travelled a good deal,—“ absurdly, (he remarked,) into foreign countries, before he was perfectly acquainted with his own.”

“ Ah ! (cried Miss Gordon,) this is our stranger.”

“ Your stranger ! (repeated Mr. Rofs ;) why, I hope there is no lover in disguise, no knight-errant.”——

“ I do not know what he is, (said she, interrupting him,) but we saw a very elegant charming man this morning by the river.”

“ Elegant and charming, Miss Gordon ! (said my father, smiling :) take care; these  
are

are words of no mean import in the mouth of a young lady."

"Dear sir, (returned she,) consider how seldom beaux are to be seen in Elgin."

"And do you consider, Emma, (said Mrs. Gordon, gravely,) that this stranger is nothing to us. I hope you will not throw yourself in the way of observation."

"As you observe, my dear madam, (cried I,) this man can be nothing to us, and you may be assured we shall not seek him; so that Mr. Rofs will have a little variety, and not be plagued incessantly with the company of young women."

As I spoke a little archly, they all smiled, and the subject was dropped.

This morning I was seated at work, in our little parlour, and, looking up, saw the very gentleman standing at the paling which incloses our fore-court. He directly took off his hat, and walked away. I confess myself surprised and agitated; there was something that alarmed me, yet why I knew



knew not, and I determined not to walk out. Since dinner, I have taken up my pen to communicate every thought to you, which always affords me a temporary suspension from disagreeable ideas.

My sister, her lord, and family, are at Bath. She is generally admired, which I do not wonder at, for certainly she is very beautiful. You I think will not suspect me of either envy or affectation, when I protest that I think beauty is very little to be coveted. It is attended, generally speaking, by vanity, levity, and self-consequence, which neglects the cultivation of the mind, gives birth to the most ridiculous follies, and too often turns the much-prized blessing into a curse.— But whether am I running? why this displeasure against beauty to you? I am really in an odd humour, and shall lay down my pen.

Miss Gordon has just been with me, in transports;—a letter from her brother. He has obtained leave of absence, and will be here

here to-morrow evening. What a luxurious meeting between three such persons ! She pressed me to spend the day with them to-morrow, but I declined it :—they ought to be alone.

I shall certainly figure away soon as the heroine of a tale. Adventures croud upon me ; and, as I never conceal a thought from you relative to myself, I give you leave to laugh at me when I confess that I dreamed all night of the stranger I had seen on the banks of the river. I suppose the second view at our gate had fixed him on my memory : however, this morning I smiled at the visions of imagination, and thought no more of the person.

My father, as usual, went to walk, whilst I was engaged in my domestic affairs ; he did not return till dinner-time, when I could not help remarking an uncommon vivacity in his looks and manner. He is accustomed to read my thoughts : “ You are surpris’d at my cheerfulness, Mary : I have called

called on our friend Rofs, and there met the stranger, with whom I have passed three of the most agreeable hours I have known for a long time. Judge how favourably I think of this gentleman, when I have invited him to tea this evening."

I was surprised, but quickly replied, —  
"Your judgment may be relied on, sir. I am sure you are satisfied that you bestow your civilities on no doubtful character."

"You are right, my child. *I am* satisfied, and I think *you* will find him not undeserving of your notice."

I bowed, but was silent. In truth, there was something so extraordinary in my father's unusual spirits, and the recollection of my dream altogether, that I felt confused without knowing why, and wished my father had not been *quite* so polite.

At an early hour Mr. Rofs came, accompanied by the gentleman, whom he introduced to me as Mr. Spencer. I know *I* blushed,



blushed, and I thought *he* too looked a little confused; but it soon wore off, and in the course of the evening he was led into a variety of topics in conversation, in all of which he displayed a fund of knowledge and the most entertaining observations. The hours flew unheeded, and I was *not glad* when the time arrived for us to separate.

My father gave him a general invitation, whilst he remained in the neighbourhood, and professed himself most exceedingly pleased with this new acquaintance. I wished to know more of him.

“If I am not mistaken, sir, Mr. Ross said he came to him without any recommendation?”

“True, Mary; but he has this morning produced such credentials, as sufficiently stamps his respectability as a man of honour, fashion, and fortune; his personal advantages are his least claims.”

Is

Is it not very singular that my father should speak thus highly of a stranger,—should introduce him thus flatteringly to a young woman who has no variety of objects to engage her attention; and, in this retired solitary place, must be but too sensible of the charms which a polished entertaining companion offers to the dull contrast?

Tell me, my dear madam, does my father believe me insensible, or does he think so very highly of my prudence and discretion, that it guards my heart and hoodwinks my eyes? I hope I have a sufficiency of both to preserve me from error, but a young woman of twenty is generally a fallible being, and we are but too apt to boast of our strength and wisdom when no temptation have put either to the test.

Do not you now, my good friend, apprehend that I am conscious of danger from this gentleman's acquaintance; but, I think, all circumstances considered, an in-

timacy, even for a few days, might as well have been avoided, for at least we shall have to regret a pleasing companion. But enough of this.—

I have had a note from Miss Gordon.— Her brother is arrived, and she intends to introduce him to me in the morning. This is a young man I long to see. My feelings on this head are delightfully gratifying.— Good night, loved friend.

Miss Gordon and her brother, my father, and Mr. Spencer, have just left me. What a beautifier is content and joy ! Never did the former look to such advantage as when introducing her brother Henry. He is a charming young man, handsome, spirited, and polite. His heart over-flowed at his lips : he spoke of the favours he had received with rapture ; and never did I enjoy such delicious sensations as when he mentioned his unknown friend in enthusiastic terms of gratitude, and blessed him for the power



power placed in his hands, to make the remainder of his mother's days happy.

O ye, who bask in the sunshine of riches and prosperity, who can wipe the tear from the widow's eye, and raise the fatherless from despair and wretchedness; who can bid the mourner look up with hope and comfort, and speak peace to the despairing and unhappy!—Oh! if in this plenitude of power, you glance a careless eye on the miserable and wretched, how great must be your condemnation!—of what rapturous moments do you rob yourselves, for where is the transport equal to that of communicating happiness!

Never, where I to live a thousand years, shall I forget what passed in my bosom at this meeting; may I live to see the generous Mr. Cranfield, and make him a partaker of the joy that now animates me!

Mr. Rofs and Mr. Spencer came in about an hour after my young friends, and I

C 2

thought

thought eyed them with particular regard. To Mr. Gordon he was uncommonly attentive, and offered to attend my father to their cottage, where we are all to assemble in the evening.

I was left with our minister. He asked my opinion of Mr. Spencer; I gave it freely, and much in his favour.—

“All that we see of him at present, my dear sir, is not only unexceptionable, but deserving respect: yet a too-hasty judgment often subjects us to error. We know so little of him, and it is so common to be deceived by appearances, that it is hardly fair to form a judgment upon so transient an acquaintance; neither can it be of consequence to him, as he will so soon leave us, and possibly we shall never see him more.”

“I should be sorry to think so, (answered he;) for I have rarely seen a man I could esteem so truly on such a short knowledge; and I hope he is equally well pleased with  
our

our society, for he does not seem inclined to leave us in haste."

I made no reply, but in return asked his opinion of young Gordon, which was highly flattering to him. He soon after left me to pursue my necessary avocations.

There is something in this Mr. Spencer that puzzles and interests me, yet my *curiosity* is folly. I have already suffered much pain from an indulgence of it, and am determined to inquire no further, for why should I wish to penetrate into the concerns of a stranger?

A few lines before I retire to bed.——We all met, or rather, I should say, Mr. Rofs and Mr. Spencer accompanied my father and me to Mrs. Gordon's. Oh! how transported she looked! "You see me *now*, my dear Miss Boyle, possessed of all the treasures that are left me. I **am thankful** to Providence for such blessings! My children are now good; may they live and die respectable!"



Tears were in her eyes, through a smile of joy. I congratulated her warmly on the return of her son. A number of agreeable topics were introduced, and we spent some hours in the most delightful conversation. The evening was uncommonly fine; a walk by the river was proposed and accepted.

Miss Gordon, as we walked near the place where we had first seen Mr. Spencer, turned to me with an expressive smile. He happened that moment to have fixed his attention on us, and the reciprocal glance caught his eye.

“On this spot, ladies, I had first the pleasure of seeing you, which, I flatter myself, will be remembered as the *happiest moment* of my life.”

We bowed, and blushed, I believe: the expression was very *strong*, but equally addressed to both.

“Methinks I sincerely wish this sensible and accomplished man had not introduced himself

himself to us. What a void shall we experience when he leaves us? We shall have to regret a short-lived pleasure, that, for some time, will impede us from enjoying our former solitary walks.

This engaging Henry will only stay ten days. Ah ! I cannot subscribe to the opinion, that “the joys of meeting *more* than pay the pangs of parting.” I already anticipate Mrs. Gordon’s distress, and feel the cheerless hours we must expect, when, in our little confined circle, we talk of the friends that have left us.

What we have not possessed, we cannot be said to regret ; and therefore, in our small society, we were content, because we had nothing to expect. Now, that we are entertained on a variety of pleasing subjects,—improved by a fund of knowledge, delivered with good sense and good-nature ; when we experience the reciprocal pleasure of a mixed society, and every hour affords

affords equal instruction and delight,—will not the loss of such a companion be felt with pain, and be remembered with a regret that will add dulness to our solitary rambles? Indeed, indeed, I wish Mr. Spencer had not come to Elgin to disturb our tranquillity.

Three days have passed rapidly on without any particular occurrence. We have had several little pleasurable rambles, and our two beaux maliciously contrive to make themselves of consequence to us, that we may the more deeply feel their absence.

Mr. Spencer and Mr. Gordon are inseparable, and the latter often looks as if he was master of some secrets from which we are excluded. There is certainly much confidence between them. Perhaps Mr. Spencer is charmed with Miss Gordon: she is a very delicate engaging girl, and I think it very probable.

I am



I am sure she would make an excellent wife, for she has one of the best hearts in the world, with the benefit of a most respectable example in her most worthy mother.

This evening they are all to assemble at our cottage, and we are to have a little concert in our garden, if I may give that name to our two voices, assisted by a violin and German flute.

Henry Gordon blows the flute remarkably well. Mr. Spencer has my father's violin. Miss Gordon has a very sweet, though not a strong, voice, and mine you know is passable, but, indeed, not so good as it was; for, having no instrument here, and seldom inclined to sing, I find my powers very much weakened;—but it is of little consequence.

An opportunity has this moment offered of sending this packet to Glasgow. Adieu therefore, my amiable friend, for the present.

sent: I shall resume my trifling journal in a day or two.

Ever your obliged

And sincere Friend,

MARY BOYLE.

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### LETTER III.

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COUNTESS STANTON TO MISS BOYLE.

THOUGH my two former letters are yet unanswered, I must be scribbling again. This romantic habit I acquired in the country, from having nothing to do; and then girls are apt to bore their friends with all their little nothings; but do not be

be out of patience, my dear Mary: I shall not plague you often, for I find a multiplicity of business pouring in upon me, that will very shortly wholly engross my time.

This morning I have appointed my dentist, and therefore have ordered myself to be denied, and shall scribble till he comes. It is a week since I took up my pen, and therefore cannot possibly go through *all* the events that have taken place in that time.

I remember I broke off to dress for the ball, where I was the first person both in consequence and beauty, and am so generally the ton, that Lady Stanton's approbation or dislike is the first thing considered by every person pretending to fashion or importance.

I have already a world of acquaintance of both sexes,—more than Lord Stanton likes I should see, but that is of no consequence. At Bath, husbands are not consulted in a lady's pleasures.

C 6.

Oh!



Oh ! but I must tell you how I served Mrs. and Misses Wellton.——I saw them soon after I entered the ball-room, in a snug corner, that would have shielded them from my notice, had not Maria pointed them out to me, and the showy singularity of their dress first attracted her attention. The poor things had put all their finery on at once, and were so loaded and bedecked this warm weather, that they seemed in a pitiable condition.

I was standing talking with Sir James Molyneux and Lord Littleworth, when a voice *behind*, “I hope your ladyship is very well,” made me turn round, and, lo ! there stood the three ladies, who were opening upon me again with very familiar smiles——I stared full at them ; “Did you speak to *me*, ladies ?”——

“Yes, my lady, (cried the eldest ;) we are glad to see your ladyship, and my mamma asked how your ladyship does.”

“You are very obliging, miss, but I have not the honour of knowing you ;”——  
and

and I turned to the gentlemen laughing.

"My lady, (said the other miss,) we had the pleasure of seeing you yesterday at Mrs. Moystyn's."

"It is impossible, my dear ladies, that I can recollect any thing of *yesterday*, therefore we are certainly strangers;" then, with a careless bow, I walked off very stately, leaving them, like statues, fixed to the spot.

The gentlemen were excessively diverted at the mortified misses, and I hope I have given them a lesson not to obtrude upon people of fashion, because chance has once thrown them into the same room together: but, as aunt Nell said, they were "bold in their ignorance;" for, in a short time after, they walked up to Maria; Almeria and her aunt being talking to some friends they had recognized.

They saluted her very familiarly. She, poor thing, received their attentions with civility,

civility, and then they repeated how *unkind* Lady Stanton had behaved when they paid their *respects* to her.—

“Indeed, (Mrs. Welldon said,) if ladies were so proud, they had better shew it by polite behaviour; for every low fool could affront another, and be rude and impertinent. For her part, she and her daughters had *good fortunes*, and under obligations to nobody. They had been very civil to her ladyship’s aunt, since she had been confirmed, and therefore, in respect to her, her ladyship might have spoken civilly.”

Now, though these observations were in low vulgar language, yet that little formal chit repeated them to me in such an expressive manner, that, for a moment, I was disconcerted, though I certainly had acted right. I replied, therefore, that I wanted no civilities from such ridiculous insignificant people, and desired she would repress their forwardness, if they presumed to attack her again.

“Your



“Your ladyship has an undoubted right to do as you please, (returned she :) but from no young person like me has Mrs. Welldon a right to be treated with incivility. I shall not seek them; but, if chance throws us together, common good breeding, and the respect I owe to myself, must prevent me from behaving rudely.”

I turned up my lip at the formal puffs, and sought other conversation.

Sir William Allen and his puritanical brother were of our party. Molyneux and the former eyed each other with no friendly looks, and I really believe Almeria has made a conquest of the latter, who is really an elegant figure, and I am told has even a better fortune than Sir William; therefore I believe he may take a despairing leap as soon as he pleases.

Well, child, I never spent four hours in such delight as in the ball-room. A crowd followed my steps, and every eye seemed

to follow me with admiration. Can you wonder if I were intoxicated?

Lord Littleworth scarce left my elbow a moment, and said a thousand of the most gallant things in the world. He is undoubtedly a fine-looking man, but he has not the careless, fashionable, fascinating, manners of Sir James. The latter attracted every woman's notice, and I could observe the dear creatures measured *me* with all imaginable spite and malice, for being the empress of the night. *Next* to being adored by the men is certainly to be envied by the women,—a sure criterion of our merit.

I returned home enchanted with every thing I had seen and heard; went to bed, and dreamed that half a dozen beaux were contending for the honour of my hand;—waked in the greatest harmony of spirits, which, soon after I was dressed, were interrupted by the entrance of old Grantham and his “languishing beauty,” as the fool calls.

calls her. I was astonished when she advanced to me with all the appearance of high health and good spirits.

After the common salutations, "Am I not wonderfully altered, coz?" asked she, without giving me leave to make the observation.

"Extremely so, indeed, (I replied ;) you look quite in *robust* health."

"Not so, neither, (returned she, with a little of her former affectation ;) but I am much better since my arrival at the Wells. We have the most charming society in the world there. The Duke of Belvoir is extremely attached to Mr. Grantham, (smiling as she spoke,) and is my escort frequently when we go to the rooms."

"O madam ! (I replied, smiling in my turn,) I am no longer surpris'd at the wonderful change. Good air and good company are great restorers of the constitution and spirits."

She



She understood me, but poor Grantham took it literally, and echoed forth the praises of the Wells, at the same time observing, that, indeed, the duke was a mighty agreeable companion, and much attached to him, which was the more kind, because of the difference in their ages.

“ Ah ! my dear Mr. Grantham, (cried the artful woman,) who ever thinks of your age, when you are so pleasant and good-humoured.”

The old fool swallowed the compliment, and called her “ his good dear.”

O man, man ! thou boasted lord of the creation, how circumscribed is your power, when woman displays her captivating charms ! how easily subdued, how gently led, by the fascinating fair, till your senses are blindly under her direction !—Here is Lord Stanton, at first inclined to pout, resent, and bounce, about nothing ;—now, by a little judicious management on my part, he sees me flirt, chat, laugh, and coquet,

coquet, with Sir James and Lord Littleworth, with the most perfect indifference imaginable; or, if *not* with *indifference*, at least with apparent complaisance; and this old Grantham, who dotes upon his "beauty," will be so well hood-winked, that she may be upon the best terms in the world with the duke; and all the *improvements* will be derived from Bristol waters.

This visit of theirs will be as short as I desire. They leave us this evening: she cannot be absent longer without *injury to her health*. Aunt Nell stares at her. Almeria looks and hears with a mixture of wonder and contempt; but I applaud the plan she pursues, which has proved to be so very efficacious.——And so much for the Granthams; they will soon figure in the beau monde.

Astonishing! I was interrupted by the entrance of Lord Stanton. Mr. Molyneux had this morning applied to him for his interest with Almeria. My lord observed, their

their acquaintance had been very short, and he thought any declaration at present must be premature. He, lover-like, displayed all his advantages, and pleaded his own discernment in distinguishing so early those amiable qualities which the lady possessed, with much more eloquent nonsense. Lord Stanton then told him, that *his* interest was already engaged to a friend.

“ I confess to you, (said he,) that hitherto I have had no cause to pride myself upon the influence I may be supposed to have with my sister ; therefore am determined to leave her perfectly free and unbiased in her choice.”

He had scarcely stopped, before Sir James Nichols was announced. Mr. Molyneux, though much disconcerted, politely took leave.

Sir James saw something extraordinary had passed by the expression of their countenances, as I suppose.—“ I hope I have not intruded unseasonably,” said he.

“ No,



"No, (replied my lord ;) our conversation was at an end."

"Then, as we are alone, (returned the other,) permit me to speak on a subject that has long dwelt upon my mind, and which I trust will do away any little unfavourable impressions your lordship might have conceived some time ago to my disadvantage."

"I am ready to attend to you, sir."

Without farther preface, the false, deceitful, avaricious, wretch avowed a passion for Almeria, and asked my lord's permission to visit her here on that footing. His odious words I cannot repeat. Lord Stanton was surprised : well he might ! but, after a little hesitation, gave him the same answer he had before returned to Mr. Molyneux, with which he seemed better satisfied however, and invited himself to attend the ladies in the evening. What assurance !

I declare to you, Mary, when my lord repeated his address to him, I could scarcely believe

believe my ears.—A selfish deceitful monster! I am sure he never thought Almeria worth a look, before she was worth thirty thousand pounds, with a probability of twenty more from her aunt.

No, I am convinced it is her fortune he wants, and the perfidious wretch is as poor as Job, or he would never think of marrying. Marriage!—how have I heard him execrate the idea!—A man so universally fashionable to commence a Benedict, —impossible! I will not give credit to such a ridiculous assertion.

I protest to you, that surprise so entirely absorbed every faculty of my soul, that I sat with my eyes fixed, my mouth half-open, and every mark of extreme astonishment, long after my lord had done speaking, and was only recovered by observing that he examined my perturbed looks with some attention.

I endeavoured to shake off the wonderful wonder that had taken possession of my mind,

mind, and replied, with great indifference, that I supposed Almeria would choose for herself, and it was by no means difficult to judge on whom the choice would fall.

"You think Sir James, I suppose," asked he, with a sparkling eye.

"Not unlikely, my lord. Sir William Allen has, I think, no chance in the world."

"I fear not, (said he,) and am sorry for it, because his affection is founded on esteem, and he has a hundred good qualities, such as I should like to see in a brother."

Company coming in, interrupted the conversation, and, as soon as I could leave them, I retired to give some vent to my indignation. Now I beg of you, Mary, not to misinterpret this candid acknowledgment of my feelings. Do not put on any dismal faces, long-drawn sighs, or believe that your poor sister is going headlong to destruction and despair.—My pride,  
my



my vanity, is mortified, child ; — that is all.

This contemptible Sir James made me believe that I was the idol he worshipped,—the goddess of his idolatry ; and has a thousand times wondered that Lady Almeria could for a moment entertain an idea that he had any degree of preference for her ladyship. *Now* the fortune is in her own hands is the temptation, but I shall have my revenge. If she marries him, she will be one of the most neglected and unhappy of women. We are going to the rooms ; how will the wretch meet my eyes ? Would to heaven they had the power ascribed to them, then would I look him dead !

Two days are past since I laid down my pen, and have been tempted more than once to throw what I had written into the fire : — but it shall go, and I expect no comments on it to my disadvantage.

More and more surprises ! and I am now perfectly reconciled to Almeria.

I have

I have not time to go back into every little incident. We went to the rooms, and I threw into my looks all the marks of scorn and ridicule that I could muster up towards Sir James. For the first time I believe he was out of countenance, but still fought, by many little attentions, to engage my notice and deprecate my wrath, afraid even to look at the golden fleece he pursued.

Luckily Lord Lefington was of our party, my favourite beau among the crowds that follow me. He introduced his sister, Lady Loveplay, her pretty daughters, and some others, to whom I attached myself, and totally neglected my own company. Indeed I was quite charmed with her ladyship, and engaged myself to make one in all her little parties, except the trio, who were candidates for Almeria's *fortune*.

I wrong Sir William in classing him with the others, for he has a superior mind, and has been less pressing for her attention since

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her

her independence.—But to continue. Except the beaux in her suite, I had the superlative pleasure of engaging all eyes, and of being followed by a train of pretty fellows, whose admiration was too visible to pass unnoticed by the Miss Loveplays and other pretending misses, who seemed ready to expire with envy, while, like a sovereign, I dealt my gracious looks around, and smiled with conscious triumph on them all !

Sir James, always a star of the first magnitude, in the regions of taste and fashion, observing my universal sway, could no longer be kept back by *interest* or *modesty*, but, with a kind of bashful assurance, forced himself near me, and affected the most tender attention to every look and action of mine ; at the same time that every woman's eyes were directed to him, and glanced on me with redoubled envy and vexation.

O Mary !



O Mary! I am convinced pride, a love of power, and the superior delight of exalting one's consequence over other females, tends more—but what am I going to say? My little sister is such a prude, that she will misconceive my meaning, and be frightened out of her wits,—at the most common things in the world.

Well, then, I shall only say, that, before we quitted the rooms, I was more than half-reconciled to my humbled swain, and returned in tolerable humour.]

The following day we had a world of company, and I had not a single moment to myself, or to devote to any one in particular; yet, altogether it was a delightful day, only that I lost an immensity at cards,—but that is a trifle. Fortune may make me ample amends this night, for her's are fairy favours, of no duration.

This morning, after breakfast, I left Lord Stanton and his relations together, and re-

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tired

tired to select some fashionable ornaments my milliner waited to display for my choice. This important business took up some time, and she had scarcely marched off with her cargo of boxes, before Lord Stanton made his appearance, with such a quick step and animated look, that I cried out involuntarily, " Bless me ! sure you are the messenger of good news, if the countenance may be trusted ?"

" You are right, my dear Caroline.—*Mine* is the herald of my feelings :—my sister has made me extremely happy this morning."

" Indeed !—Pray let me participate, if I may be allowed that privilege."

" You have a right to share in all *my* pleasures, (replied he ;) and I am persuaded will not be uninterested in the event I have to communicate."

*He was right just then.* He proceeded :

" Agreeable to my promise to both gentlemen, I mentioned to Almeria the application

tion Sir James Nichols and Mr. Molyneux had done me the honour to make as her brother, and as candidates for her favour. I displayed the advantages each gentleman possessed with justice and impartiality, declared myself unbiaſſed by either, and left the choice or refusal to her own judgment."

She appeared equally ſurpriſed and agitated whilſt I ſpoke. After a few moments' pauſe, ſhe ſaid, " You have then entirely given up the intereſt once ſo warmly exerted in favour of Sir William Allen ?"

" No, Almeria, (I replied,) Sir William muſt ever poſſeſs my preferable eſteem ; but, knowing your ſentiments, I have condemned myſelf to ſilence, indeed, at his particular requeſt ; for all his hopes expired with our father, and he could not bear you ſhould be teased with ſolicitations for him, or that he might riſk your diſpleaſure, and be excluded from your ſociety, merely becauſe he adored you. Of him, therefore, I have nothing to ſay : he will be ever my valued friend,



friend, though he cannot be my brother ;—but my sister's happiness must depend upon her own selection, and I know him too well not to be assured *that* is the first consideration with Sir William Allen, and to promote it he will, without a murmur, sacrifice his own.”

“What an eulogium ! (cried she ;) and yet of *him* “*you will say nothing.*” Ah ! brother, how meanly must you think of me in a comparison with our friend !—but now hear the history of my heart.

“From my first appearance in public, I was distinguished, flattered, and admired. My little head was giddy with vanity ; I became a coquet, and exulted in the power of my charms, not then conscious that novelty was one of my greatest attractions.

“The strong affection I felt for my father suppressed some of my follies ; and, when we retired into the country for the summer, his ill health engrossed all my attention, and brought me to some degree of

of reflection. Sir William then besought my father's favour. He strongly recommended him, but I had been too well pleased with my reception in public to feel any inclination to resign my liberty, and the admiration of the world, so soon after my introduction; I therefore entreated my father that I might be allowed to decline his addresses. That good parent would not urge me, only requested I would take time to consider, at the same time he candidly told Sir William my sentiments, that he might not indulge hope against probability.

“ The gentleman acquiesced, and only by silent assiduities sought to gain my esteem; *that* it was impossible to deny him: his merits fairly entitled him to universal respect.

“ Whilst I was in town the preceding winter, Sir James Nichols had followed me with marked attention. He was a general favourite, and my vanity was gratified by the distinction. Our good father, having

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been in habits of acquaintance with his family, treated him with kindness, which encouraged a visit from him when we had been some time in the country, and just as your marriage took place.

“He was invited to wait your arrival; and, my father being confined from any out-door amusements, both my aunt and myself were pleased that he accepted of the invitation. The sad events in Lady Stanton’s family, detained you longer than we expected, and your intention afterwards of going first to London disconcerted all for the present. Sir James however stayed, as my father talked of meeting you in town, if his gout should go off. The arrival of more guests suspended his purpose, and you, with your lady, were invited down.

“After your arrival, Sir James Nichols altered the plan of his behaviour to me. Possibly, as at that time he meant nothing, he did not like the scrutinizing eye of a brother. I will not attempt to conceal from  
you



you that I was much hurt by his behaviour; that, and some other incidents, made me look into myself, and caused an amazing change in my sentiments, with more judgment to correct my former errors. But this change did not take place without pain, which I saw was remarked, and therefore struggled to hide, though it cost me dear.

“The ever-lamented death of a beloved parent fell heavy upon a weakened mind, and the alteration in *my* health was one of your kind inducements to come here.— My dear brother, reason has triumphed over a weak heart. I feel better both in mind and body, and this day will complete my cure. Know, then, that I triumph in the offer of Sir James Nichols, at the same time that I can see and despise the mean motives by which he is governed.

“I triumph, because I have the power of refusing his hand, and can assure him with great truth, that, in *my* eyes, he can

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never

never be regarded but as a very common acquaintance.

“For Mr. Molyneux’s favourable opinion, I am much obliged ; but he can be nothing to me. As to your friend, Sir William Allen, if he can forgive my former rejection of his addressee, and still entertains that esteem which reflects so much honour upon me, by the excellence of his character and his disinterested conduct”——

She stopped here, but I made no comments, though I believe she translated my looks.——

“I will own to you, my dear brother, that I shall be gratified in shewing him *that* preference he so greatly deserves, and hereafter, at a proper time, shall feel no repugnance to confirm it with my hand.”

“I scarcely gave her time (added my lord,) to finish the sentence, before I pressed her to my bosom, and exulted in my sister’s laudable discrimination.

I have

"I have left her in the pleasing consciousness of conducting herself with judgment and generosity, and to receive the warm congratulations of her aunt; and now, my dear Caroline, having, I believe, faithfully repeated every word, do you not think I ought to be proud of my sister?"

"Most undoubtedly, (I replied.) Lady Almeria has acted perfectly right, and I am truly rejoiced that her preference has fallen on Sir William."——I did not fib *there*.—

"Well, (said he,) now I must fly to Sir William. Every moment I stay is a treason to friendship. It will be time enough to announce disappointment when I meet the others in the evening."

So off he posted on the wings of friendship, and left me as blithe as a bird, for I feel exceedingly happy at Almeria's decision.

Some folks shall do penance pretty severely for their deception, though I know



the motive : the experiment was a hazardous one, and might have been productive of mischief.

But I am talking in riddles, therefore shall conclude this long epistle, though I had fifty things to say, and many characters to draw; but I expect company to take an airing, therefore adieu, dear Mary.

Learn from me to be communicative, and write very soon all your adventures at the ruinous castle, on the banks of the river, and elsewhere: — Duty to my father, and compliments to your old parson with his grey locks,

Adieu,

Ma très chere sifiter,

C. M. STANTON.

Oh ! I had forgot, I have had a letter from Frederic. The gentleman he is with is not expected to live. — What must he do

'do then? Sure it was not a wise scheme of our father to give up his estate, and confide his son to the care of others?

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#### LETTER IV.

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COUNTESS STANTON TO MISS BOYLE.

I Am extremely sorry I cannot recall my letter of yesterday.—To persons so prone to judge erroneously, so fond of malice, as to turn the generous confidence of a friend against her,—and so prudish, as to call trifling in the gaiety of a cheerful mind guilt,—to a censorious and self-conceited person, I have furnished weapons against myself.—That person is my sister. The letter I have just

just received is the last I shall trouble myself to read,—and these few lines closes our correspondence for ever !

C. M. STANTON.

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LETTER V.

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MISS BOYLE TO MRS. ROWE.

My dear Mrs. Rowe,

A Letter of your's, and one from my sister, are just received. *You also* are at Bath. I beseech you, delay not to visit Lady Stanton, and, (forgive the expression,) if you are permitted, cultivate her acquaintance. I have a thousand anxieties for a woman so young, and so lovely, so followed, and



and so admired. To you I may speak plainly ; you know that, from childhood, the seeds of vanity have been nourished in her bosom ; that, with much good nature, and a large share of understanding, she has been indulged in frivolous gratifications, and taught to believe, in the words of the poet, that

*If to her share some female errors fall,*

*Look at her face, and you'll forget them all.*

Consider, my dear Mrs. Rowe, the intoxication of being followed by a crowd,—of being an object of admiration and envy. Ah ! it requires uncommon prudence, much self-denial, to guard against the delusions of the heart, and support that reserve and dignity becoming the female character, when surrounded by every temptation and frivolity of the gay world.

In such circumstances, how valuable is a true disinterested friend, and how rarely is such a treasure to be met with ! I know Lady Stanton has formerly treated you  
with

with coldness, but you are every way her equal, but in title. She cannot therefore forget what she owes to you and herself; and, if you can gain an influence over her, how desirable the connexion!

I postpone every other consideration to dispatch this letter. My heart bounded with joy to see it dated from Bath. Lose no time, my beloved friend, and write to me the moment you have seen my sister. Say but little of me; except it is to assure her of my warm affection. To-morrow, if my spirits are more composed, I shall begin another letter. Till then heaven blest you.

Ever your affectionate

MARY BOYLE.

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LETTER

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## LETTER VI.

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MISS BOYLE TO MRS. ROWE.

|| TAKE up my pen as a relief to my mind, which is greatly agitated ; but I will endeavour to forget recent causes, and turn back to my memorandums, where I concluded my last letter, for the few lines I wrote yesterday I do not place to account.

The evening of that day on which I sent off the packet was intended to be dedicated to a small musical party in our garden ; but the best-laid plans are too often interrupted, and promised happiness clouded by sorrow.



forrow. About two hours before I expected my friends, I received a note from Miss Gordon, evidently written with a hasty and disturbed hand, "that her brother had received orders to join his regiment immediately, as it was going on a secret expedition, and not a moment must be lost."

"As this order came from the worthy general himself, poor Henry, (she said,) would not delay a moment on any account, and the distress of her mother was indissoluble. She added, we might expect to see her brother for five minutes some part of the evening, but she and her mother were busily and disagreeably engaged in preparing for his departure."

This note gave us real concern. It was still in my hand, and the tear trembling in my eye for the feelings of my amiable Mrs. Gordon, when Mr. Rofs and Mr. Spencer came into the room. They saw my emotion, and inquired the cause.

Unable

Unable to speak, I held out the note, and the officious tear fell on my cheek.—Mr. Spencer seemed affected; he run it over in a moment; then, looking at me, “Sweet sensibility!” he exclaimed.

Poor Gordon! such is the frail tenure by which happiness is held!

“I wish to see him, but their present situation is sacred. Will you permit me to stay here, sir, though the party is broken up?”

“By all means, (replied my father;) indeed it will be very friendly of you to do so, as we are quite disconcerted by this unexpected interruption to our little plan of amusement.”

We sat down, and tried to beguile the time by starting different subjects; but I saw only poor Mrs. Gordon, heart-broken, taking leave of her son, and more than once wished he had not made this visit to his friends. My inquietude was but too visible, and attracted the regards of our friends,

friends, who kindly strove to dissipate it.— At length Henry appeared. The meeting nor the parting cannot be described. We had loved him before; we saw him, and his manners had confirmed our judgment in his favour. I believe never was so short an acquaintance productive of equal regard, or a parting felt with more regret, on both sides.

Mr. Spencer determined to accompany him to his first stage, that he might return with pleasing intelligence to his family — Was not this most friendly and considerate? I was pleased with him; he saw it by my looks; yet, in the same moment, I thought this intention is doubtless to recommend himself to Miss Gordon; and *why should he not?* reason whispered to my heart; is she not amiable, and has he not judgment?

You see, my dear friend, that I am neither free from folly, nor desirous of concealing it from you. Indeed, if there is one sentiment



sentiment of my mind relative to myself, which I could wish to hide from you, I should conclude it a very bad sign, and tremble for myself.

At length, our young friend tore himself away, recommending his mother and sister to our kind attentions. Mr. Ros and Mr. Spencer accompanied him back at his own request: he thought their presence might restrain the sorrows of his mother.— Spencer sent from our house for his servant to get his horses and necessities ready immediately.— Such were the unpleasant circumstances attending that evening we had set apart for mirth and music.

I did not close my eyes the whole night, and in the morning, at an early hour, I flew to Mrs. Gordon's. We mingled our tears together, but I had the pleasure of seeing the heroine struggling to overcome the feelings of the mother.

“ My son must attend his duty, (said she,) and Providence will protect him. I will

will not doubt it. After such instances as we have lately experienced of its goodness, I rely with the utmost confidence on its unerring goodness and mercy."

The first emotions over on our meeting, we naturally reverted to Mr. Spencer.

"Is it not very singular, (said Miss Gordon,) that Mr. Ross should be so partial to a stranger so oddly introduced, that he would wish him to attract our notice, and obtain our regard, without explaining his pretensions to either; and that he seems quietly to have taken his residence at Elgin, —a place so unlikely to amuse a gentleman at his time of life?"

"Doubtless, (answered Mrs. Gordon,) there must be circumstances that have led him to this choice; and I am apt to believe our dear Henry, short as was their acquaintance, has been let into the secret. Perhaps his motions are similar with ours; pecuniary difficulties, or the loss of friends may have driven him from the gay world."

Miss

Miss Gordon sighed, and for a few moments seemed lost in thought : her mother, speaking to me, did not observe it ; but I easily penetrated into her sentiments, and determined, in consequence of my observations, to question my father about this too agreeable stranger, who might prove a dangerous companion in our small circle.

Having engaged the ladies to drink tea with us in the evening, I returned home, not in the most cheerful spirits, and found my father and Mr. Rofs at chels, the former more than commonly animated. I employed myself at work until the party broke up, and Mr. Rofs retired with a promise of meeting his friends at the tea-table. My father was pleased to hear of Mrs. Gordon's resignation and composure, and hoped Mr. Spencer would return in the evening, to give a good account of the young foldier.

“It was kind in Mr. Spencer to accompany him, (said I,) as it must prevent the sorrows



forrows of parting from dwelling on his mind ; but, dear sir, may I ask who and what is this Mr. Spencer ? who appears to be a general favourite, and may gain our esteem before we know what real pretensions he has to deserve it ; for appearances are often so fallacious, that it is dangerous to rely wholly upon them.”

My father smiled : “ His pretensions to our esteem, he will one day unfold to you himself. I am satisfied that he is entitled to mine, and young ladies are seldom more fastidious than fathers to the claims of an agreeable man.”

I was surpris'd at this loose or vague kind of answer, so little according with my father's disposition ; but I was not willing to give up my inquiries so easily, therefore, affecting a smile in my turn, I replied, “ But this agreeable man, sir, may make himself of too much consequence. Miss Gordon is young, and truly amiable ; a companion so pleasing as Mr. Spencer, where there is no competitor,

WOMEN AS THEY ARE.

competitor, may acquire too much interest in the unsuspecting heart of our young friend."

"I hope not, (said my father quickly;) but *you*, Mary,—you are not apprehensive of danger; *you* can esteem a worthy man, without losing your heart?"

The question and the manner disconcerted me. "No doubt I can, sir; but yet I must say that Mr. Spencer is a dangerous companion for young women, because his good sense and polished manners cannot fail to interest every one in his favour, and the heart may soon follow the lead of judgment."

"Then you wish him to leave Elgin, my dear Mary?"

I hesitated, and felt a little confused.—

"My wishes, sir, can have no influence over Mr. Spencer, and young women are seldom so very prudent and abstracted as to desire the absence of a pleasing companion. Perhaps we may feel equal regret

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that we have known him, as that we may soon lose him ; but I am persuaded, sir, I ought to say no more on the subject, for your prudence and judgment may be relied on."

Here the conversation ended, and I rose to dress.

I will not trouble you with any reflections, for a thousand vain and foolish ideas arose, which I blushed at and condemned ; and, when we met at dinner, Mr. Spencer's name was not introduced by either of us. Young Gordon was our theme, and spoken of with equal esteem by both.

Our friends were punctual to their appointment, and every one strove to appear cheerful and happy ; but in the Gordons it was evidently an effort. A sudden cloud and a heart-felt sigh often escaped from the mother, and a pensive air frequently overspread the features of the daughter. "The secret expedition" was mentioned with mingled concern and resignation."

It



It was late before Mr. Spencer made his appearance. When he entered the parlour, joy and solicitude sparkled in every eye. He advanced, and, bowing gracefully to Mrs. Gordon, presented a note to her.

"I have left your amiable son perfectly safe, and with spirits and sentiments befitting a soldier, though with feelings not unbecoming *your* son.—Your brother, my dear Miss Gordon, charged me with the most affectionate remembrances to his darling sister, and grateful respects to his worthy friends," bowing round to us all with inimitable grace.

His address pleased every person. Even Mrs. Gordon suppressed the rising sigh, and joined a little in a most spirited conversation, evidently introduced to diversify our thoughts.

When the ladies rose to leave us, he was on his feet in a moment to attend them, and I remarked the blush of pleasure which suffused

flushed the cheek of Miss Gordon at his alacrity.

It was perceptible to the dullest comprehension that he was more than a common favourite with her; nor did he appear less inattentive than others; for I thought he looked at her with a very peculiar expression, when he assisted in throwing on her cloak.

I retired to my apartment, leaving Mr. Rofs and my father together. I was lost in various unpleasant retrospects, when our servant hastily entered the room. "O miss, miss! here is a muckle bad affair. Poor Sandy Macdonal's wife is brought to bed of two bairns, and the luckless lad has broken his leg by a fall, in going to fetch help for her. Ah! wae is me! what can be done for the poor souls?"

I started up.—"Where, Patty, is the house? I will go to them directly."

The good creature blessed and flew before me. The evening was closed in, but  
it

it was moonlight. I followed, through a narrow lane, to the skirts of a little plain, where stood five or six of the most wretched hovels I had ever seen, not more than a quarter of a mile from our house, though I had never been that way before.

We entered one of these miserable dwellings; the scene that met my eyes beggars all description. In one corner laid the poor woman, on a truss of straw, with a blanket thrown over it, and another over her;—two young girls, about two and four years old, with only a short petticoat round their waists, literally naked else, one giving something in a cup to the mother, the other holding the two infant-children, wrapped together in a piece of blanket; while, in another corner, in a similar situation, laid the poor man, writhing with pain, an old woman, the exact resemblance of Otway's hag, busy about him.—But it is impossible to give you any idea of the horrid scene, which shocked me inexpressibly.



Patty cried out, "Ah, Peggy! take good heart, my lassie: here is my own sweet mistress come to see you. Bless the poor bairns, the gude God above wull nae forsake them!"

On inquiry, I found poor Peggy, by the help of the old woman, was perfectly safe, but entirely destitute of every necessary for herself and children. I asked if no surgeon could be found, and learned there was one in the town. I sent Patty off full speed for him, and then to call at our house, acquaint my father where I was, and bring with her some wine, and other trifles.

During her absence, I heard a tale of poverty and misery that made the blood run cold in my veins. I thought of poor Lear's apostrophe to pomp and proud men.

My God! could the affluent and happy know the miseries of their fellow creatures, of their *brethren*, surely they would deprive themselves of superfluous finery, of rich,  
and

and often-untasted, viands, to distribute bread among the forlorn and humble cottagers !

Were I to live a thousand years, and in the most exalted station, never shall I forget this scene of distress, — never would I pass the straw-thatched cottage that covers misery, without extending the hand of relief ! I thought every minute an age till Patty returned. At length she came, well accompanied ; for, to my great surprise, the surgeon, Mr. Ross, Mr. Spencer, and my father, were close at her heels.

“ Ah ! (cried the humane creature,) I have brought them all : God be thanked, here is help enough. Cheer up, Peggy ; thy gude mon and thy poor bairns wonna die this time.”

Every possible assistance was immediately given to those unhappy people. The gentlemen made a handsome contribution for the man ; the woman and children I took

under my protection, until she was restored to health. The man's leg was set, a person hired to attend them, and every comfortable necessary provided.

Never was more humanity and active benevolence exerted than by Mr. Spencer.— A trifling incident displayed the goodness of his heart more forcibly than even the handsome sum he gave for the benefit of this poor family.

It was near midnight before we returned, and my father insisted upon their stepping in, and taking a glass of wine with him.— They complied, and then Mr. Ross first asked me how I came to the knowledge of the calamities we had witnessed. I repeated Patty's very words, and spoke highly of her humanity, which met with general applause.

They stayed but a few minutes, and she attended them to the door; then returned to the parlour, with her hand extended, her mouth half open, and all the marks of wild



wild astonishment. "Bless me! (I cried,) what is the matter now, Patty?"

"There, madam, there! (said she, pointing to her spread-hand, in which I saw five guineas.) God bless the worthy laird! for a laird he must be. He put all this gold into my hand. 'Patty, (said he,) that is for you, because you have a kind and charitable heart;' and so to be sure, if they had not pulled the door fast after them, it might have stood open for Pat; for I was so stounded, that I could do nothing; no, not even bless the princely laird.—But, to be sure, I never had so much money of my own before. If your goodness, miss, will let me keep it, others may be the better for it too. Lord! I can never make away with all this riches myself."

"Be careful of it, my good Patty, (said my father.) Use it wisely, and it will be a reserve for you, should you happen to be afflicted with sickness or accidents hereafter."

E 5

"Ah!"

“ Ah ! then, (answered she,) I will give it to our good minister to keep for me, and worship the noble laird as long as I live.”

I have seldom passed a night with so much true satisfaction to myself. I did not sleep indeed, but my reveries were pleasing, and for a time banished every care from my heart. What a mind does Mr. Spencer possess ! For the honour of human nature, I will not believe design or duplicity can harbour there ; yet there certainly hangs a mystery about him, and mystery too often implies guilt, or at least follies that need concealment..

But what is it to me ? If he makes any pretensions to Miss Gordon, doubtless her mother will take care to penetrate through this veil that hides his family, connexions, and former residence ; for he never speaks of either, and such a reserve surely implicates something wrong.

The

The next day, when this interesting man came to the house, Patty opened the door, and plumped down on her knees. Before she could speak, he caught her up. "If you wish to please me, my good woman, say not a word." She got up sobbing, and ran to the kitchen.

He entered with an air so serene, and a countenance so beaming with goodness, that, in truth, my dear Mrs. Rowe, your little friend felt her heart palpitate in no common way. Ah! what is become of that fortitude, that delicacy and decorum, on which my partial friends used to compliment their Mary?—How little do we know of ourselves! I own to you that I tremble, lest I should, on a strict scrutiny, find myself entangled in a preferable regard for a man whose sentiments appear decidedly in favour of another. Forbid it prudence, forbid it pride!

Perhaps I am alarmed without a cause, for it is so natural to love goodness, that I



must have no susceptibilities, did I not warmly esteem Mr. Spencer; and, thinking as I do of Miss Gordon, how can I suppose that either should be insensible to merits so obvious and attractive? Let me then conclude they were designed for each other, and that conviction will place a guard on my heart.

A whole week passed after the affair of Sandy and Peggy without much change in our entertainments. Our patients amended fast, and Mr. Rofs purposed laying out the small sum given by Mr. Spencer, my father, and myself, to which afterwards Mrs. and Miss Gordon kindly contributed, in purchasing a small farm, a cow, and a few sheep, which would enable those poor people to pass their days comfortably, with industry and frugality.

To assist the unfortunate in the line they have been accustomed to, and procure them comforts in the sphere Providence has placed them, is the most essential mode to procure

procure ease and happiness; for we may observe, in a thousand instances, that, when interest or fortunate occurrences raise a man beyond what birth and education fitted him for, he is, generally speaking, awkward and unhappy in himself, envied and ridiculed by his equals, and despised by his superiors; when a small assistance, as a spur to industry, which might procure the necessaries of life, and enable him to bring up his family in the same decent and industrious way of living, would have made him happy and respectable.

Such have ever been *my* sentiments, and therefore Sandy and Peggy will have such helps as their good conduct may deserve, and their children food, raiment, and an useful education. I already consider them as pensioners to Mr. Cranfield.

During the three last days, our little circle seems no longer the same. Miss Gordon looks more pale and melancholy, her mother anxious and uneasy, — Mr. Spencer embarrassed,

embarrassed, and his once-open countenance clouded with reserve. My father has two or three times appeared on the point of declaring some secret,—then hastily stops, and leaves me.

What a painful situation is this ! I cannot long endure it ; and, now that I have closed my memorandums, and speak of the present time, my anxiety and suspense, with other causes, which torture my heart, throw a gloom over my mind almost insupportable.

O my dear Mrs. Rowe ! hasten, hasten to me intelligence of my sister ! Strengthen that heart, whose weakness is thus candidly unfolded to you, and pray for me, that, in the hour of trial, I may not shrink in fortitude and resolution, or prove unworthy of your cares and friendship.

Mr. Spencer, Mr. Ross, and my father, are now in the garden. They appear to be in earnest conversation ; I can see the former is agitated, and uncommonly interested.

—They



—They separate : Mr. Spencer leaves them rather abruptly. Surely no quarrel has taken place ; he cannot be found unworthy of their esteem.—I tremble : Mr. Spencer “ requests permission to wait on me in my little study ; ”—to what purpose ? what can he have to say to me ?—He comes.

Two-thirds of the day are passed since I saw Mr. Spencer, yet my heart still flutters, and astonishment pervades every sense. I still doubt the evidence of my eyes and ears ;—a confession so strange and romantic outsteps credibility.. “ And *thou* too, Brutus ! ” *thou*, my dearest confidential friend, could you plot against your poor unsuspecting Mary ? Alas ! my mind forebodes many painful events, and at this moment it is difficult to decide whether joy or sorrow is predominant in my feelings.

I will, however, go back to the entrance of Mr. Spencer. He looked embarrassed, and uncommonly serious : I felt confused and uneasy. He bowed, and spoke a few words

words about intruding, to which I could only answer by pointing to a feat. He took the chair, and after a moment's pause addressed me in the following words,—words imprinted on my heart in indelible characters.

“Conscious, madam, that a mind like your’s must disapprove of every species of deception, however blameless the motives that induced me to assume a false name, (involuntarily I started ;) — already you are alarmed, and your eye reproves me ; but condescend, dear Miss Boyle, to attend, unprejudiced, to the circumstances of this assumed name and character ; and, though I may appear capricious and romantic, judge me with the candour so attached to your decisions, and I will submit to whatsoever punishment, short of banishment from you, that I may appear to deserve.

“My name, madam, is Gardner,—Bevil Gardner. I know not if Lord Stanton ever spoke

spoke of me as *his friend*; but *such* I profess myself.

“Early on his marriage, he mentioned Miss Boyle with affection and respect; but, no ways interested in investigating characters I knew nothing of, the idea dwelt not on my mind, and several circumstances, which fell under my eye at Stanton-Place, raised in me no curiosity to know Lady Stanton’s sister.

“On my return to London, accident threw me frequently into company with a lady whose character and conversation I greatly admired,—your friend Mrs. Rowe. *You* were the constant theme of her eulogiums: she delighted to dwell on your excellencies, and your superior claims to respect and esteem. I caught some part of her enthusiasm, and grew enamoured of your *mind*, for of that only she spoke; and I was led to believe you had few *personal* claims to admiration.

I have



“I have been called an eccentric being, a capricious, sedate, unfashionable, young man. A delicate constitution in my boyish days gave me a habit of thinking; I acquired resolution to judge and act for myself. I had the worthiest of men for my tutor; he attended me abroad, guarded me against the infection of bad company and bad morals. To him I am indebted for escaping the contagion of example, and preserving my own esteem. Pardon the implied vanity, as it has served to insure to me the approbation of the world, for my singularities were objects for ridicule among fashionable people.

“A residence of some weeks together, in one house at Paris, drew on an acquaintance between Lord Stanton and myself.— I saw he was carried away by a natural gaiety of heart, good humour, and lively spirits, into frivolous company and idle pursuits; but, on several accidental occurrences, discovered traits of humanity, feeling,

ing, and honour. He attached himself to me with the most flattering attention ; and, though he had not resolution to avoid follies he was ashamed of, yet his errors and imbecility were evidently the faults of education and habit, not depravity of mind.

“ Our intimacy gradually increased, and I trust will continue uninterrupted, though the larger portion of his attentions are devoted where they ought to be.——Pardon this digression, madam ; I fear I have already fatigued you.”

“ By no means, sir, (I replied, with a tremulous voice,) I feel greatly interested. Pray proceed.”

He bowed, and went on.

“ Mrs. Rowe’s animating description of her deserving young friend recalled to my mind the portrait Lord Stanton had drawn of his sister Mary. My thoughts insensibly dwelt on no other object. Long had I wished to form an union with an amiable woman,

woman, whose cultivated mind was superior to the frivolities of fashion, and in whom the engaging wife and sensible friend were inseparably joined.

“But no such Phoenix was to be met with in public places, in gay parties, or in any private circles, where I had been admitted. I saw the whole female world, in higher ranks of life, devoted to folly, unacquainted with sentiment, unknowing, and undesirous of knowing, the happiness of domestic life, or that congeniality of mind, that propriety of conduct, requisite to form the basis of matrimonial felicity; and my pride revolted against seeking in subordinate stations for such an object as could alone make me happy in an union for life.

“I seek not to screen from your observation, madam, those faults which I cannot conceal from myself. Pride of birth is truly contemptible, yet I am sorry to acknowledge that wrong ideas, early instilled into my mind, have never been totally eradicated,



dicated, either by reason or conviction of its absurdity.

“ I saw hereditary distinctions disgraced every hour by the meanest actions, and the most despicable sentiments ; yet, though I despised their principles, I occasionally mixed in their circles, because I could not condescend to associate with plebeians, much less think of taking a wife, whose birth and connexions I might hereafter blush for.

“ From the disgust I entertained to the higher class of females, and the absurd, though invincible, objections I had formed against an inferior rank, I was not likely to meet with any object that could reconcile the contradictions, or engage my love and esteem.

“ Mrs. Rowe first interested my curiosity, and engaged my attention. After several interviews between us, I at length acknowledged to her the prepossession of my mind, and ventured to inquire minutely of your person,

person. She evaded giving me any satisfaction, and, as I had by no means left personal charms out of the picture imagination had drawn as necessary to my happiness, I concluded Miss Boyle had no such charms, or her friend, who delighted to speak of her superiority in every other requisite, would not be silent on such as most generally supercede every other in the estimation of men.

“ Miss Boyle, therefore, though deserving of esteem, I would think no more of in any other point of view. Such were my determinations, but they were weak and fruitless; your name was ever on my lips, and fancy would pourtray a form deserving to encase the rich jewel of the mind.

“ I could no longer command my feelings, but frankly communicated my romantic design to Mrs. Rowe of following you to Elgin, and, under a borrowed name, left the one of Gardner should be known to you, seek

seek to gain an introduction to Mr. Rofs, your father, and yourself.

“She laughed at my absurd project of going so far to satisfy what she called an idle curiosity; but, after some conversation on the subject, she condescended to give me two letters, one for Mr. Boyle, the other for her darling friend; with both I had a discretionary power.

“That day I left London. My route was unknown to my friends. Mrs. Rowe accompanied her uncle to Bath. I hastened to Elgin, and on my arrival inquired for the habitation of Mr. Rofs, which I intended to visit the following day, devoting the remaining part of that evening to settle the mode of introducing myself, which certainly was rather an awkward business without any recommendation.

“Tired of being within doors, I strolled towards the river, by the landlord’s advice, as the “finest walk in the world.” There I beheld



two ladies, and heard one of the sweetest voices reading Shakespeare with a propriety and discrimination that astonished me. I drew nearer; the dog saw me, and I was discovered.

“Transient as was this first interview, it decided my fate.—‘If that elegant feminine form, that harmonious voice, and interesting countenance, claim the name of Boyle, my happiness is in her hands, and *that* object rules my future destiny.’

“Such were my conclusions in a moment. I lost no time in presenting myself to Mr. Rofs. His hospitality, his noble confidence in a stranger, made me blush at wearing the mask of deception. I very soon unlocked my heart to him, and, by his advice, to Mr. Boyle also. I would instantly have made the same acknowledgment to you, but was prevailed upon to delay it, that the attention with which I was honoured might not receive a check from an idea of duplicity operating to my disadvantage.

“Impa-

“Impatiently I have waited Mr. Boyle’s permission to disclose myself. The air of reserve, which, for some days past, has to my attentive eye clouded your countenance, and filled me with unspeakable anxiety, determined me to hasten a confession so essential to my peace; and, at the same time that I feel and acknowledge my unworthiness to entreat your pardon for a capricious and romantic deception, that has fixed the colour of my future days, either to be marked with despair and sorrow, or crowned with unequalled felicity.

“Miss Boyle has the power of dispensing either. To her I look up as the arbitress of my fate, and deliver up this letter, which I have unjustifiably withheld, trusting that it will have some influence to my advantage.”

Here Mr. Gardner concluded his long address. I do not think I have omitted a single word, and seemed with an eager and penetrating eye to wait for my answer.

The subject was too interesting, and my thoughts too much confused, to afford a possibility of arranging them at that moment, or of deciding upon my own feelings. Endeavouring to collect as much composition, and a manner as void of affectation as possible, I replied, “ That a discovery and sentiments so little expected, on my side, required some consideration, before I could determine, in what manner it became my character to give any countenance to a duplicity equally affrontive to myself and my friends, and unworthy of himself ; that I so much abhorred every tendency to secrecy and concealment, I could not easily forgive such an imposition ; as his curiosity or caprice might have been as easily, and more properly, gratified, had he appeared here as the friend of Lord Stanton.”

An air of inexpresible chagrin and sorrow, which overspread his intelligent countenance, made me add, looking on the letter, “ You have brought a powerful advocate



cate in your hand ; for, if this acquits you, or can extenuate the fault you have been guilty of, though I may accuse my friend of partiality, I shall be but little inclined to condemn what she can excuse."

He rose, and, gracefully bowing, " Let the sincerity of my confession at least mitigate your displeasure. I will not longer oppress you ; may your usual generosity operate in my favour, for *my all of happiness depends on you.*"

Pronouncing the last words emphatically he quitted my apartment, and I sat down to ruminate,—to wonder at such unexpected information. So much were my thoughts occupied, that I forgot for some moments that I held your letter in my hand ; and, when I did recollect, and broke the seal, I own to you, that I felt less of pleasure, and more of anxiety, than I had ever before experienced on seeing your hand.

I perused it with attention. I acknowledge with you that Mr. Gardner possesses

much attraction, both in his person and manners; and, as I have no doubt but he deserves the amiable character which has conciliated *your* esteem, I cannot with any justice withhold *mine*. Yet I must say there is a peculiarity, a caprice, in coming such an immense way to satisfy a strange curiosity, to see if a woman, worthy of your approbation, was not ugly and deformed.—What a tacit reflection upon a *tolerable* understanding! as if incompatible with a *tolerable* person. What a disgraceful implication against pretty women! as if, like Mahomet's beauties, they possessed no souls. Surely you cannot, you will not, defend him on this ground. Singularity is rarely to be justified; yet, as no human creature is free from error, perhaps the indifferent opinion he entertains of our sex may be his predominant failing, and I will in charity conclude that this weakness proceeds rather from knowing too little of the female world than too much.

But

But are you not surprised that my father should have countenanced his absurd plan? Perhaps, indeed, your letter reconciled him to the deception. If I had not had the *good fortune*, if you please, to have attracted his regards, those letters of your's, it seems, would not have been delivered; and, after journeying some hundreds of miles to satisfy a romantic curiosity, he would have hastened back to upbraid you for leading him into such a wild-goose chase.

Upon my word, my dear partial friend, you ventured too much on the capriciousness of taste, for even beauty has no universal suffrage.

But to be serious, for I sometimes wish to appear playful with an oppressed heart. I very much apprehended many unpleasant circumstances will attend this development of Mr. Gardner's journey and sentiments. I am persuaded Miss Gordon is strongly attached to him; every look and motion speaks it past a doubt. She has



the sweetest disposition in the world, a good heart, and a sensible, but not a strong, mind. Her susceptibilities have been continually worked upon by painful events and embarrassed circumstances; a delicate constitution incapable of exertion, and rather yielding to than struggling against sorrow.

A mind, a frame, like her's, is ill calculated to bear the disappointment of its best wishes; much less to support an avowed preference to another; and could I bear to see her sink under a stroke pointed by me, or the person attached to me?— Could I coldly look on, and view the unfortunate mother trembling for the happiness, if not the life, of her darling child? Assuredly I could not. Never, never will I purchase happiness at the expense of a friend! never could I feel pleasure in a union that must entail misery upon another!

You will infer from this that I am not quite so free as I could wish from a preference

ference in Mr. Gardner's favour: I attempt not to deny it. My heart *did* palpitate with pleasure when he declared me "the arbitress of his fate." He has many good, many noble propensities,—a benevolent mind, the superstructure for every virtue: my father and Mr. Rofs admire and esteem him; my best friend honours him with her regard. Every circumstance tends to make judgment go hand in hand with inclination; and I may, without any imputation on discretion or delicacy, own a preferable esteem for a deserving man.

But my dear Mrs. Rowe, if ever I marry, I will have no drawbacks on my happiness by regrets for another; no heart-felt sighs, no bitter tears, from a disappointed friend shall mingle with the smiles of Hymen. I have fortitude, I hope I have, to resign my own wishes; but I cannot brave the reflection of destroying the very small portion of hope and comfort left to an unfortunate mother,

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who

who has no other companion, no other consolation, than her amiable child.

What then is to be done? I will see my father, I will open my heart frankly to him, and I will entreat Mr. Rofs to disclose Mr. Gardner's real name and circumstances, (not his regards for me,) to Miss Gordon. I shall soon see her after such a discovery has been made, and soon judge from her manner, (for she is candour personified,) how her *heart* is affected. On *her*, not on *me*, must depend the accomplishment of Mr. Gardner's wishes; for once more I declare, never will I wound the bosom of a friend.

I have seen my father. He received me with an animated eye and a smiling countenance. Before I could speak, he embraced me. "My dear child, I congratulate you and myself. My Mary has gained a heart worthy of her, and I shall have the inexpressible pleasure of seeing her filial duties rewarded



rewarded by an union far beyond my most sanguine hopes."

I kissed his hand. "Your Mary, my dear father, must rejoice at every event productive of happiness to you. I came to speak, to unfold my heart, to you; and from your counsel to derive fortitude that may ensure to me your applause and my own esteem."

My dear father looked at me with surprise. I took advantage of his silence, and proceeded. I spoke of Mr. Gardner as he appeared to deserve. I sought not to conceal the partiality that had stolen upon my heart from a high opinion of his merits.— I then ventured to hint at the many unequivocal testimonies of the same, if not a preferable, regard, which was obvious in Miss Gordon's whole conduct towards that gentleman; and therefore I besought his permission to delay my answer to such a declaration as was doubtless very flattering, and honourable to me; but which, at the

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same

same time, from some existing circumstances, required the most deliberate consideration, before I could feel myself at liberty to give a decided opinion upon; because, when once given, I could not recede from it."

This was my father's reply.

"I am sorry, my dear Mary, to see you are less attached to Mr. Gardner than his merits and generosity have an undoubted claim to. I can readily enter into your considerate motives with respect to Miss Gordon; but, let me tell *you*, that, from what I know of Mr. Gardner, did no such person exist as Mary Boyle, Miss Gordon never would have a hold on *his* heart. He is not a vain, volatile, frivolous, man; he must respect and esteem the woman that he marries; his eye must not be disgusted, but his judgment must approve, his reason, admire, the companion he selects for domestic happiness.

"Your character won his esteem, and induced him to undertake a long journey, to be

be convinced that the picture was not overcharged by the hand of friendship. He feels, he acknowledges, himself over-paid for the trouble : he thinks *my daughter* the most estimable of women. His happiness, he avows, depends upon your acceptance of his hand ; the study of his future days shall be to promote your felicity, and, in *your's, mine* must be included

“ Hitherto, my child, you have evinced uncommon fortitude, discretion, and goodness ; but our very virtues may be extended beyond their proper limits, till they cease to be respectable. There are other duties besides those of friendship ; let not a generous enthusiasm throw a veil over your reason : do not refine away your own happiness by a romantic expectation of giving it to another. I again repeat, were *you* entirely out of the question, Miss Gordon could not, would not, be singled out by Mr. Gardner as a companion for life.



“ Consider well, my dear child, on what I have said; I shall say to Mr. Gardner, that you wish for this day to yourself, but to-morrow you will see him with pleasure. Even this delay, this deliberation, is affronting to his merit, when he has my sanction, which, however, would not have been given but from a conviction that your heart speaks in his favour:—that heart may be trusted to my dear Mary. You will have time given you. Mr. Gardner requests permission openly to obtain your esteem and confidence: if he is found unworthy of either, he will banish himself from you for ever; therefore, remember at present he only asks a limited and probationary approbation.”

My father left the apartment. I did not once interrupt him, and I thought, but I hope I was mistaken, that, for the first time in his life, he cast an eye of displeasure towards me. Surely he cannot think that I am capricious, romantic, or guilty

guilty of affectation ;—then he must despise me. Oh ! for worlds I would not forfeit the esteem of a beloved parent !

I broke off here, for I was inexpressibly hurt under the idea of having incurred my father's displeasure. I returned to the parlour, and met Mr. Rofs : he had a smiling face ; his looks however changed when his eyes met mine. I followed him, and, as I had intended, requested he would, without delay, acquaint the Gordons of Mr. Gardner's discovery, and let me know the result.

The good man readily acceded to my wishes, and was leaving the room as my father entered. I caught his hand : “ Dear sir, you are not offended with me, I hope ? ”

“ No, my dear, (replied he, pressing my hand ;) I may be *grieved*, but it is impossible you should *offend* me.”

I withdrew

I withdrew with a full heart, and have since been taking it to task pretty severely. I have even asked myself whether pride or a false heroism is not at the bottom of this, shall I say, self-denial? In short, I feel very much displeased with myself, and that is, you know, to me an insupportable reflection.

I hope I do not appreciate undue merits to my conduct or sentiments, yet, if I know my own heart, the purest motives govern me in what I think due to Miss Gordon as a friend, as well as to my own character. Self-delusion is a fatal error, and therefore I will be strictly critical in my investigation of all my designs and determinations.

Here I shall conclude this packet, and send it off. To-morrow I shall resume my pen. If you feel displeased at my abrupt conclusion, think it only a fair retaliation for the plot against me in which you have taken a part so active, that, for your peace  
and



and my own, I pray heaven grant it may terminate favourably !

Ever your's,

MARY BOYLE.

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LETTER VII.

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MRS. ROWE TO MISS BOYLE.

COULD certain facts have admitted of disguise or even palliation, or had there existed a possibility of concealing from you an ungrateful truth, my beloved friend will do me the justice to believe I would have been the last person to wound her bosom, or to retail a scandalous tale.

The

The story is promulgated from house to house, and might reach you with ten-fold aggravations in an unprepared moment, therefore it is the office of a friend, however painful to herself, to set before you plain unvarnished facts. Arm yourself with fortitude, now that you are called to the trial, to support a father, and pity a poor, lost, misguided,—sister.

In what words, my dear Miss Boyle, shall I clothe intelligence so distressing! how tell you that Lady Stanton, forgetful of what she owed to herself, her husband, and her family, has sacrificed all to gratify the vanity (for, if report speak truth, *love* he is incapable of feeling) of that coxcomb, Sir James Nichols. Having disclosed this hateful secret, that, for two days, has oppressed my heart, I will endeavour to go back, and retrace preceding events.

On my arrival at Bath, gaining information of Lady Stanton's residence, I waited not for your request; but, knowing your wishes,

wishes, I delayed not sending off a card to her ladyship, expressive of my intention to pay my respects to her on an early day. The return was a *verbal message*, with "her compliments, and should be glad to see Mrs. Rowe any day."

My uncle was extremely hurt at this mark of incivility, a card would have cost so little trouble; but I was not disposed to be fastidious, and considered more the favours I had been honoured with from Mr. and Miss Boyle, than the childish petulance or pride of Lady Stanton; therefore, against his wishes, the following morning, I waited on her in his carriage, and in a stile of respectability that might give some consequence to her visitant.

I was admitted and received with politeness. Two ladies and three gentlemen were present. After a few reciprocal questions, relative to her dear sister, the conversation became general and trifling enough.

Before



Before I put an end to my visit, Mrs. Stanton came into the room. When introduced to her, she honoured me with particular attention; and, for the last fifteen minutes, I was much gratified by her sensible remarks on men and manners; while the others had formed themselves into a group, for the important business of settling the evening's rendezvous.

On taking leave, her ladyship said, with a *sort of kind freedom*, "I shall always be happy to see you, Mrs. Rowe, and will take the first opportunity to call on you."

She might *intend* to be kind and polite, but the words and manner implied a superiority and carelessness indifference that hurt me at the moment, and I fear the slight bow I returned was accompanied with a look of contempt, and a spirited tone to the servant, "Be so good as to order my carriage to the door, sir."

On my way home I was angry with myself for being disconcerted at the ill-breeding

ing of another person ;—but that person had been my pupil, and I felt it as a tacit reflection either on my abilities and care, or as a degradation to the situation I had held in her family. I made up my mind not to expose myself again to similar treatment, and formed no expectation that she would condescend to return the visit, consequently I was not disappointed.

Alas ! unhappy woman ! vanity and self-consequence had acquired such an absolute dominion over her heart, that she saw not, felt not, any gratifications but in the nothing-meaning adulation of the men, and the servile imitation and insidious praises of interested dissipated women.

Lady Stanton was the general theme of admiration and censure. The one is too often productive of the latter ; it requires uncommon fortitude and a strong mind for a young and lovely woman to withstand intoxication, or conduct herself with such propriety

propriety as to escape the malignant observations of envy.

Unfortunately your poor sister had no encouragement to strengthen her mind. *I* was not permitted to guide, scarcely to inculcate, lessons that might have repressed the seeds of vanity, or trodden down the weeds of folly as they rose. Accustomed to praise, early taught the value of her beauty, by affectionate and mis-judging relations, from her personal charms she fought to derive consequence ; and a natural good understanding, capable of every cultivation, was considered but as a secondary recommendation, or rather thrown into the scale, as adding but little weight to the all-powerful balance of beauty.

Can we wonder that a being thus tutored, encouraged to look forward to a *brilliant* establishment in marriage, as the only desideratum for happiness, independent of the heart or principles, and an anxious wish for titles and riches, early implanted in a fruitful



fruitful foil, nurtured by the never-ceasing regrets of others, for having forfeited them by a too-hasty marriage, where an *union of hearts* was the only consideration,—where is the surprise that such dangerous lessons should be productive of evil, when reason and judgment, which could alone counteract the poison, were not permitted to expand, but turned and perverted to assist the favourite plan?

Alas! how often is the affectionate and even sensible parent misled by the delusive and dangerous hope of seeing their darling child advanced in life by a splendid marriage! How little do they reflect on the rocks and quicksands that impede unwary youth in their road to the deceitful flowery paths of gaiety and pleasure, and the snares spread by a treacherous corrupted world to allure young and inexperienced minds into the vortex of vice, where they are hurried away by pernicious examples, pursuing happiness where she never can be found, and overtaken

overtaken by misery, contempt, and reproach, in a premature old age, without one consoling thought on a retrospection of the past, and a painful prospect to the close of life !

Poor Lady Stanton !—yet why should I aggravate your sorrow by useless reflections, that wound the memory of the dead ?—But, indeed, my pity for her has recalled many unpleasant scenes to my view, and my pen is accustomed to trace my thoughts, when writing to you without reserve.

A week had passed since my visit to Lady Stanton. I had seen her twice in public ; and, as I was accompanied by Sir Thomas and Lady Preston, I obtained the honour of her notice, to which, but on your account, I should have been perfectly indifferent, for I had scarcely thought of her for many days ; my mind being occupied with much more agreeable ideas, in tracing the triumphs of goodness and sensibility over beauty and folly,—ideas, I trust

trust, long since realized as a counterbalance to the contents of this letter. So chequered is the good and evil of this life, that pleasure and pain only precede each other; and she best proves her duty to the Supreme Being who receives both with fortitude, as trials of her virtue, without being too much elated with the one, or sinking, unresisting, under the other;—either betrays a little mind.

How I digress!—Forgive me, my amiable friend, but in truth I linger, unwilling to detail particulars which must pain you; yet suspense is equally torturing where the event cannot be concealed.

Two days since a large party dined with my uncle. One gentleman invited, a Mr. Campbell, did not attend us, nor send any apology for his absence, which, as my uncle observed, was the more extraordinary, as he was the most punctual man alive, and very tenacious in points of ceremony. The tea-business was just concluded, when Mr. Campbell



Campbell was announced, and, before he had time to apologize, he was followed by Dr. Skinner. Saluting us hastily, he exclaimed, "Mr. Campbell, you are the very man I wished to see. I am told you were on the ground with Lord Stanton and Sir James Nichols : — is either dangerously hurt ?"

A scream of terror and surprise, which I could not repress, called the attention of both to me. "For heaven's sake speak, (I cried,) what is the matter? who is hurt?"

"Neither, madam, (replied Mr. Campbell,) is, I believe, in danger, though no matter if that worthless poltroon had lost his life, if the forfeiture of it had not affected Lord Stanton."

"Pray what is all this? (asked one of the company.) Explain; has there been a duel between the parties you speak of?"

"Aye, let us hear what is this extraordinary business? cried another.

"Oh!

“ Oh ! nothing *very extraordinary*, (replied Mr. Campbell ;) Sir James Nichols, that favourite of the fair, naturally admired the beautiful Lady Stanton. She had too much taste not to be *grateful* for the distinction, and the consequences may be easily imagined. The only extraordinary circumstance is, that Stanton, a fashionable man, a man of the world, should have the folly to risk his life on such a common occurrence. It seems he made the discovery last evening, and this morning the parties met. The behaviour of Nichols was pusillanimous in the extreme. His contemptible conduct proved that he was *bold only* in the service of the ladies ; and, however formed to captivate, and conquer them, has not spirit enough to *justify* their favours, or honour sufficient to *conceal* them.

“ The worthless fellow sought to exculpate himself at the expence of Lady Stanton.—However, he was compelled to stand his ground : they exchanged shots, and he received a wound near his right

shoulder, which broke his arm; and, having no *inclination* to use his *left* hand, he dropped the pistol. At Stanton's request, I accompanied him to his lodgings, and, faith! was exceedingly sorry to witness his extreme agitation: he is distractedly fond of his wife, and at present seems to think his happiness is destroyed for ever!"

"He held it by a frail tenure then, (said Dr. Skinner,) if dependent on the virtue and constancy of a woman. I beg your pardon, madam, (added he, turning to me,) I do not mean to imply a general censure; but, upon my word, the levity and dissipation of the married ladies is by no means calculated to draw favourable conclusions on the sex; since, the moment they become independent of a parent's care, and launch into the world, they pursue folly in every shape, and take pains to lessen their own consequence, to destroy the respect and homage they might otherwise claim, and to *invite* freedoms their every look ought to *repel*."

"Come,



“Come, come, doctor, (cried one of the gentlemen,) do not you turn Mentor; and, because you are not quite young, and not likely to profit much by the dear creatures’ good nature, set yourself up for a satirist to reform the age.—Things are extremely well. If the ladies are kind, their eyes are open; this is an enlightened age; they cannot plead ignorance, or accuse us poor devils of seduction. There is no veil to blind either party, and, if people will plump into little disagreeable affairs, it is their own business. Women know the chances are against them, and men that marry must look to the consequences, if they mix in fashionable circles.”

“Shame on the manners of the age! (exclaimed the doctor,) where virtue and honour have so little countenance, and vice, if covered by rank and fortune, walks a broad unblushingly, because it can plead example and boast of companions.”

“Dear doctor, (said Mr. Campbell,) it is lost time to rail against the manners of

the present day ; but, as you are in habits of intimacy with the ladies, you had best try if you have eloquence sufficient to be *their mental* physician. Depend upon it, reformation is in their hands. Whenever honour, confancy, and discretion, are necessary passports to *their* favour, and *morals* the criterion by which we are judged worthy of their attention, then, and not *till then*, men will cease to be worthless insignificant beings."

I had been so extremely shocked by the information of Mr. Campbell, that I sat in a kind of stupor for some minutes, hearing all, but incapable of speaking. At length, recovering, as he pronounced the last words, I hastily asked what was become of Lady Stanton.

"I know not, (answered Mr. Campbell;) but am inclined to think she is still with his lordship, and perhaps by this time he may be sorry that he has furnished the tea-tables

tables at Bath with such a delightful scandalous anecdote at his expence."

The conversation continued on the same topic, whilst the company staid, and I sat on thorns of anxiety and curiosity, till they took leave, considering whether my former situation with Lady Stanton's family would authorize the liberty of a visit, as no notice had been taken of a former one; but circumstances were now altered, and that attention I had conceived her undeserving of when in the full career of insolent prosperity, the affection I owed to her dear father and sister, called upon me to pay her *now*, when, perhaps, her former companions would desert her,—at least for a time.

The next morning, while I was preparing for this purposed visit, I was surprised by a message from Mrs. Stanton, apologizing for the liberty of introducing herself for half an hour, if I were disengaged. I conceived myself honoured by the visit, and she was presently announced.

G 3

I rose



I rose to receive and express my sense of the favour. She interrupted me : " Pardon me, madam, I can take no merit to myself, though it has been my wish to cultivate your acquaintance. I wait upon you now at the request of my nephew, Lord Stan-ton. You are the particular friend of Mr. and Miss Boyle ; my nephew has the highest esteem and respect for both. Tell me, madam, have you heard of the unfortunate circumstances which have taken place in our family ? "

I bowed my head assentingly. " I did not doubt it," (proceeded she.) " Scandal flies on eagles' wings." Thank heaven, my nephew's rashness has not cost him his life.— Ah ! madam, he adored his faithless wife, and taught her to set too great a value on that beauty which has proved her ruin.

" Had my advice been taken, that base infiduous wretch had never been permitted to renew his intimacy in the family. Deep laid was his villany, when not a fortnight since

since he had the presumption to offer himself to my niece, at the same time that he was plotting to betray and wrong her brother."

I uttered a few words, expressive of my concern at the story I had heard promulgated.

"I have no doubt, madam, that you feel for both families. Lady Stanton has injured the most confidential and best of husbands; but he cannot give her up to pursue infamy, and entail further disgrace upon us all; neither can he bear to be the sport of licentious tongues, nor endure the finger of scorn. He has suddenly indeed, but decidedly, taken his resolution. At present she is confined to her own apartment; but they leave Bath to-morrow for Wales: there, retired from the world, shut out from society, she will learn to repent of her past conduct, and see the horrors of her situation, degraded, despised, and precluded from every gratification of vanity.

“ Unhappy woman ! how much has she sacrificed for a contemptible object ! what anguish has she heaped upon all her connexions ! My nephew, madam, cannot repeat the horrid tale to a father,—to a sister, both of whom he esteems. He has deputed me to request your kind interference between both parties ; he entreats you to write for him ; he wishes to stand justified in their opinion, and assures them, injured as he is, he shall take no measures to promulgate his and their disgrace to the world ; he will not sue for a divorce ;—damages can make no reparation for lost honour, nor heal his wounded peace. The moment that he has completed his arrangements and composed his mind, he will write to Miss Boyle, whose character he reveres.

“ I confess to you, madam, (continued Mrs. Stanton,) that I bitterly feel this disappointment, this degradation, to our *family*. We have cause to believe her ladyship is likely to bring an addition to it.—Think, madam, under what disgraceful circumstances



cumstances the child must come into the world,—a proscribed, an infamous, mother! Good heavens! how bold and assuming is vice in these degenerate days; neither virtue nor delicacy could restrain her passions; but I intrude upon you.—This is an unpleasant task that my lord solicits from you, but I hope you will oblige him.”

I readily assured her I would do so, though it was indeed a painful office; but it was the duty of friendship to soften a blow that, from an indifferent hand, might be more severely felt.

She told me that the following day she should accompany Lady Almeria and Miss Penrickard to Stanton-Place, where they intended to remain some time previous to her ladyship's marriage with Sir William Allen, as such an event could not be thought on immediately under their present affliction.

She concluded her visit with politely assuring me that she should feel happy to cul-

tivate my acquaintance, if we fortunately met again.

I requested my respects to Lord Stanton, with my best wishes, and offers of service upon all occasions ;— and thus ended our conference.

I got no rest last night. I pitied Lord Stanton ; I felt for my beloved friends ; yet I am persuaded from the earnestness of your last letter, that you had some apprehensions of the propriety of your sister's conduct from the adulation that followed her ;—too much, indeed ; yet oftentimes a very general admiration is less dangerous than a single flatterer, divides the attention, and calls for less gratitude ; but this unworthy man was a general idol, and therefore particularly noticed ; nay, one gentlemen had the confidence to assert yesterday, “ that the éclat of this affair would make much to his advantage, and the ladies would be more attached to him than ever.”

ever." But surely it cannot be ;—for the honour of our sex it *cannot be* !

. This day I hear Lord and Lady Stanton set off in a travelling chaise, his valet and one servant only attending. Her woman was discharged ; the other party and servants proceeded to Stanton-Place.

At present this affair engrosses all the attention, and many different opinions are sported on Lord Stanton's taking her into the country ; but novelty soon changes its object at Bath : fresh circumstances and new follies rise up every day ; and to the disgrace of the age, the most atrocious crimes incur little more reproach than trifling follies. But a day must come, however complaisant the world, when we cannot deceive ourselves, or stifle the monitor within ; then what becomes of the poor vain deluded creature, who has shut her ears against instruction, has boldly plunged into guilt, forfeited honour, integrity, and



conscious innocence, broken the most solemn vows, and extended her infamy among all her connexions !

O my dear Miss Boyle ! let us pray for your unhappy sister, that repentance may soon overtake her while she has youth and health ; that, by a life of penitence she may atone for this one great error, and recover lost esteem in her husband and friends.

Do you, my good and amiable young friend, take comfort. I know your sensibility, and can judge what you must feel ; but this world is a life of trial, and the Divine Goodness generally proportions our strength to our afflictions, if we nobly exert that reason and fortitude implanted within us.

You have a strong mind ; make the effort to console your father ; and, while he deplores the depravity of one child, let him glory in the prudence, discretion, and nobleness of mind, which various causes have called forth in his beloved Mary.

To

‘To alleviate the sorrows, and smooth the down-hill of a tender parent’s days, must afford that delightful conscious satisfaction to an upright heart, as will amply over-pay the rubs and crosses that impede you in the road to happiness. A steady perseverance in our duty must be attended with success, for true felicity is found only in the bosom of our family. Whatever vicissitudes we experience, however separated from our friends, or wheresoever we wander, our wishes still recur to home, and, from the sweets of domestic life alone, can we expect peace and tranquillity.

Let me now drop the painful subject of this letter, and enter into one that engrosses every wish of my heart. Long before this reaches you, I hope you have forgiven my little plot, and pardoned my former reserve when speaking of Mr. Gardner.

I am sure you are mutually pleased ; for “like minds will mingle,” and my science cannot be disputed. I trust you  
have

have acquired a *friend*, who will assist you in the task of comforting your worthy father, and also by his attentions will blunt the arrows of affliction, which I know will wound your delicate and sensible mind. Every thing that I hear of Mr. Gardner speaks highly in his favour, and I have not been remiss in my inquiries, therefore can assert on the very best grounds that he is *deserving* of your esteem. I cannot make an eulogium that will do him more credit.

Let me hear from you without delay.— You will judge of my anxiety, and I doubt not of your kind exertions to remove it.— Heaven bless you, my dear and amiable friend.

Ever your devoted

SARAH ROWE.

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LETTER



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LETTER VIII.

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EARL STANTON TO MISS BOYLE.

PREPARED, as I suppose you are, before this, to hear the story of my disgrace, and the destruction of my best hopes, it gives me infinite pain, my dear Miss Boyle, to be under the necessity of justifying my own conduct by accusing one so nearly allied to you by blood, (would to heaven she had been so by her virtues!) one whom I so truly esteemed, one still too tenderly beloved,—Lady Stanton.

Mrs. Rowe kindly promised to convey the fatal intelligence that I could not, in  
the

the hour of agitation, repeat to a father or sister without doubly feeling the wounds I must inflict on them. Alas ! my dear sister, could you have believed that your Caroline, my wife, would have been corrupted, so *soon* seduced from virtue, from herself, and me ! Fool that I was, in *her* I had treasured up my soul : I shut my ears, my eyes, and believed the siren when she was scheming to betray me.

Curse on the insidious villain who has destroyed my happiness, a cowardly base seducer ! who, when called to the field, would have given me a letter, which he said “ Lady Stanton had sent to him, *inviting* him to a *tête-à-tête* ; and what man of spirit could refuse ? Even Lord Stanton would not have been a Joseph, had he been so tempted.”

I snatched the paper from his hand, and tore it to atoms, as I could have done by the despicable cowardly evader ; but I disdained all altercation, and obliged him to stand his ground. He was wounded, and a  
letter

letter I have this day received from town informs me it is believed his arm must be amputated. I rejoice in the circumstance; I *must* rejoice:—deeper, and more painful far, than the loss of a limb is the incurable wound fixed in my heart.

Once I was gay, volatile, and thoughtless. Love, the most ardent tender love, gave me a new soul; I lived, I breathed, but for my Caroline:—well has she rewarded me! O Miss Boyle! bear with me, for I am half distracted. I will hurry over the shameful story of my injuries and *her* disgrace.

The renewal of an intimacy with (I cannot write his detested name) was the effect of my confidence in a false woman, whose seductive caresses and arts for some weeks past had taught me to believe that I was the sole engrosser of her heart.—Dissembling creature! The villain too had the consummate assurance to apply through me for my sister's favour; doubtless he knew  
he



he should be rejected, and the scheme was planned to throw me more off my guard.

Happy in the choice of my sister; proud, gratified by the admiration which followed my wife; lulled into perfect security by her caresses, and fondly believing that a particular circumstance, which would have crowned my wishes, had also a happy effect upon her sentiments, and would tend to domesticate her in a short time. With all these delusive agreeable prospects, my heart bounded with delight; and, in the moment when I was congratulating myself as the happiest of men, the thunder came rolling on to hurl the bolt that confirmed me a wretch for ever!

I had been importuned to make a visit at Bristol-Wells by Mr. and Mrs Grantham, and, some friends of mine going there for a day or two, I reluctantly consented to accompany them; it was with reluctance, for I regretted a single day spent from my wife, and she declined going. I was pre-  
vailed

wailed upon contrary to my inclinations ;— ah ! I had a presentiment doubtless of the fatal consequence, yet heaven knows no suspicion dwelt upon my mind of any improper advantage being taken of my absence.

I left my house, intending to return the following evening. The artful siren returned my embrace, and entreated me not to exceed my promised time. Oh ! the falseness of women ! Forgive the exclamation, which anguished remembrance has drawn from my heart.

We arrived at Bristol ; and, proceeding to Mr. Grantham's, I had the mortification to hear he was extremely ill, the house in confusion, and surrounded by medical gentlemen. I could not think of staying there ; and, after rambling about during the day, I persuaded one of my companions to return with me to Bath the same evening. Nothing impeded our design, and I enjoyed by anticipation the pleasure Lady Stanton

Stanton would express at seeing me thus unexpectedly.

It was near nine o'clock when I arrived at my own door, where one of the servants stood with it open, and started back on seeing me. I asked if the ladies were at home. "Only his own lady, (he said,) who was at cards with Sir James Nichols; the other ladies were gone to Mrs. Moystyn's; the carriage was ordered for them at ten."

Why I was agitated I know not, for it is certain not a thought injurious to my wife came across my mind. I entered the drawing-room; cards and lights were on the table, but no company. The bed-room and dressing-apartment were on the same floor. I attempted to open the door of the former, and found it was fastened. A little surprised, I called out, "Caroline, my love!" A confused bustle struck my ear, and she faintly answered, "I shall attend you presently, my lord."

In



In the same moment, my eyes fell on a table near the door, where laid the hat of Sir James Nichols. Without the least hesitation, my very soul in tumults, which gave me uncommon strength, I set my foot against the door, and burst it open. She screamed, and fell back in a chair, her dress in much disorder. I stepped back, and locked the outer apartment; then, returning in a kind of frenzy, I demanded of her, still motionless in the chair, "Where is Sir James Nichols?" She could not speak. I examined the room, and then passed into the other; there, crammed in a small shallow closet, stood the wretch, trembling and pale as death. I seized his arm, and dragged him out. Never shall I forget the bitterness of that moment!—"Vile despicable villain! (I exclaimed,) what dost thou not deserve?"

He attempted to speak: he tried to palliate, to excuse himself and her, but I heard him not. I was agonized:—I know  
not

not what I said, but I remember I drew from him a solemn promise that he would meet me the next morning, otherwise I swore I would post him for a poltroon and a coward throughout the world, and hunt him like a beast of prey; then, giving him a violent shake, I threw him contemptuously from me.

The involuntary screams of Lady Stanton, on seeing him detected, and my unguarded rage had brought up the men-servants to the drawing-room, which I had locked, and now opened to give Sir James his liberty. They started back on seeing us: I bid one of them order the carriage to fetch my aunt and sister, and the other to bring me a glass of wine and water, for I felt my rage subside, and a sudden sickness seize my heart.

I drunk what I had ordered, and was revived. I returned to the loft, guilty, yet too-charming, Caroline. She seemed to have gathered courage; she looked steadily at

at me ; “ Well, sir, now that you have exposed both me and yourself by your rudeness and injurious conduct, what treatment is reserved for me ? ”

I felt an icy chillness creep round my heart at the insolent contempt with which she asked the question. Rage and tenderness by turns assailed me, and it was some moments before I was composed enough to answer her, which I endeavoured to do with calmness.

“ I shall consider, madam, what best becomes my own honour, and the respect I have for your worthy father and sister : I shall I hope be less influenced by my provocations, than by those considerations.— Mean time this room is the boundary of your walks ; your woman shall attend you here, but the key shall be in my possession.”

Without waiting for an answer, I rung for Dulot, her woman ; and, ordering her, when she wanted any thing for her lady, to ring,



ring, I locked them both in ; and, retiring to the outer room, gave vent to the emotions that had almost choaked me.

O my dear Miss Boyle ! think what that man suffers who knows the dearest object of his affections is no longer worthy of his esteem ! Think how difficult to teach a refractory heart to feel indifference and contentment for a person he has been accustomed to view with the most perfect tenderness and delight ! I know not if the separation of the soul and body in the agonies of death can inflict pains more acute, tortures more severe, than what has agitated my frame this last week.

Why did beauty mislead my senses, and, like an ignis fatuus, lure me on to ruin !— Did I not see, did I not know, the coquetry of her disposition ? Ah ! I am fatally convinced that a coquet can have no principles either of honour or virtue. A mind so imbecile, frivolous, and contemptible, may

may be easily drawn on by an artful man to be guilty of the most shocking excesses.

O Caroline, dear lost Caroline ! is it of you I speak ? is it my wife who is this odious character ? — Yes, she is indeed lost to honour, to principle, and feeling, and has buried my happiness in the grave with her virtue ! —

But let me return, and conclude a recital that awakens every tender as well as stormy passion in my soul.

When my aunt and sister returned, they found me every thing but mad. The horrid story shocked them inexpressibly ; they sought to soothe and compose my tumultuous passions, but in vain ; I passed the night in a chair, in the drawing-room : No sleep visited my eye-lids. Several times I heard the unhappy woman speaking loudly, in a tone of fretful impatience to her servant ;—her voice was daggers to my soul.

I was to meet the villain who had injured me in the morning. I employed myself in writing and settling my affairs, as well as the distracted state of my mind would admit of. I wrote a few lines to the cause of my misery and to my sister. As the morning began to dawn, the crime I meditated rose in its full force to my mind.

Duelling I neither approved of nor could justify : it was contrary to the principles of religion ; it militated against reason and prudence ; but honour, and the customs of the world, more arbitrary than the dictates of conscience, I conceived, called upon me to punish a villain. It is true, I run an equal chance of losing my life, therefore the contest was unequal ; but life was of no value in my estimation, and every feeling of my heart, every law of honour, obliged me to revenge an injury, the greatest that man can do to man.

It is thus that we indulge in a number of absurd prejudices ; we are sensible they



they are such ; our reason condemns them ; yet, slaves to custom, to pride, and passion, we suffer them to become our masters, because we have not fortitude to stand the ridicule of the world.—Such were my reflections, but they came too late. I met the man who had so cruelly injured me, and staked my life against a coward's.

The event you know ; and, in my cooler moments, I was not sorry I had punished him without having deprived him of a worthless being.

I returned to my house. Within two hours after, the affair was blazed through the city, and the solicitude of my friends informed my relations of the preceding event.

As I have not that meanness of soul to pocket money as a reparation for *irreparable* injuries, nor choose to have my wrongs become a subject for public investigation, neither would my feelings and respect for

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your

your family permit me to throw off an ungrateful woman, and abandon her to shame and infamy. The world was a desert to me, deprived of the wife I adored. Every eye would reproach me with her lost honour, and I felt too keenly the ruin of my happiness to mix with those more fashionable husbands who gave countenance to vice by their toleration of licentiousness.

*I* determined to withdraw myself, and, by secluding *her*, punish that vanity which had deluded her into the shameful excesses I once thought her incapable of.

I borrowed my aunt's house, which is retired, and exactly calculated for my purpose. Having completed every order necessary, I discharged her woman, and told her, that, in the solitary retirement I had chosen to reside in, such an attendant would be quite superfluous, as the wardrobe selected to take into the country would be such as she might easily put on herself.

I will

I will not repeat her words or manners in silence too often accompanies bold premeditated guilt; it tended to confirm my resolution, and steal my heart.

It is unnecessary to enter into a detail of our journey. We arrived at Melton-Abbey, which, in the days of our forefathers, had been a large extensive building, but time has made many depredations, and confined the habitable part to a narrower scale. The ancient remains of solitary grandeur had induced my aunt, who is devoted to old customs and old castles, to purchase it. The tottering ruins were supported, one part repaired, and a *very little* modernised; the rooms large, lofty, and gloomy, from the brown-oak lining and small casements; two rooms only having sashes.

The cloisters surround the courts; the long echoing gallery, and the strange figures carved in niches,—altogether inspire awe, solemnity, and a kind of repul-



five terror, that shrinks from every object that meet the eye. Yet is the situation pleasant: the abbey stands on a declivity that gradually slopes towards a river, beyond which you see rising hills covered with sheep. On each side of the building is a garden and orchard; behind a fine hanging wood.

I am thus particular in describing the abbey to you, my dear Miss Boyle, because it is now become the boundary of your sister's walks and pleasures; and you may be sure to her it appears a most desolated gloomy prison, though my aunt Stanton is not a little proud of it.

Eight days we have been here. We have separate bed-rooms, and she breakfasts in her own apartment upon *milk and bread*.—Tea, coffee, and chocolate, are prohibited, but we dine and sup (when we do sup) together, on a plain joint and vegetables.—Few words pass between us: she is haughty and silent, I distantly polite.

You

You will think, perhaps, that I am puniting myself, and must soon be tired of a mere vegetation: I believe she entertains t<sup>h</sup>e same idea; but, if she founds any hopes on that presumption, she will be disappointed, at least for the present; and, whatever alteration I may be induced to make in *my* plan, no change shall take place in her's.

She is entirely secluded from society, yet I do not mean to debar her from the benefit of your letters; on the contrary, I beseech you to write. Your tenderness, your gentle reproofs, may produce that sorrow, that penitence, more becoming the feminine character than the haughty insolence, I hope affected, which seems to triumph in guilt, and in the power of inflicting pain.

Write to her, my amiable friend. Be assured your correspondence will be sacred for me. If you think my system wrong, if your father disapproves of my measures, speak

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without hesitation. I will be guided by you in every step you propose, *one* only excepted,—she returns not to the gay world.

This moment a letter is forwarded to me from Sir Roger Penrickard, a fellow-sufferer from the same cause. He has settled with his quondam lady, through the interposition of her father, to allow her a separate maintenance without the éclat of a divorce; in consequence of which she returns to England with her gallant.

This, in my opinion, is a toleration of vice. I will have no separate maintenance; my wife has forfeited her honour, but I will not resign my right of making her *feel* for her folly. She shall not extend her infamy; and, having no restraint, nothing to impede her career in licentiousness, heap shame and contempt on *my* name, or on *your's*.—No! solitude, to a weak and depraved mind the worst of evils,—solitude shall teach her to reflect on what she has  
lost

lost,—virtue, character, a fond husband's love, the esteem of her friends, and (above all to her) that admiration which was the darling wish of her heart, and to the gratification of which she feceded every sentiment that was amiable in woman.

This one predominant passion will now be completely mortified, and that is the only punishment I shall devise to revenge my injuries.

My sister Almeria, once volatile, capricious, and inclined to coquetry, has happily exchanged inclinations, so unworthy of a sensible well-disposed young woman, and adopted sentiments more honourable and more respectable. She is now become capable of discriminating between the nothing-meaning, lip-deep, professions of idle or interested men, and the sincere respect and esteem of a truly-worthy heart. In a short time she will be the wife of Sir William Allen, and I shall embrace as a brother the man I so warmly esteem.

EL 5

Ah!!



Ah! why cannot I present to him a sister deserving of his love? Why do I incessantly *reproach* myself for an affection rooted in my heart, and destroying my peace? An object, unworthy of esteem and fallen into contempt, should cease to be interesting to one's feelings; but I cannot command mine.

Adieu, amiable and dear Miss Boyle; I trespass too long with this painful subject,—on your sensibility. May I stand acquitted by Mr. Boyle and you! If I am wrong, deign to inform me. I am, now and ever,

Your most affectionate Brother,

STANTON.

LETTER

## LETTER IX

MISS BOYLE TO MRS. ROWE.

II Resume my pen and my narrative.—  
 Your Mary, who expected to have glided through life on a humble retired plan, occupied only by domestic duties, seems fated to be called into busy scenes, that may possibly be productive of much future inquietude to herself and others. An uncommon dejection pervades my mind; I feel something like a presentiment of evil impending; yet what folly to indulge in visionary chimeras or superstitious fear!—  
 You have taught me better, and my mind

H 6

has

has been stronger than it is at present ; not for myself I fear, it is for the peace of others —But let me proceed from the conclusion of my last letter.

Within less than an hour after, I perceived Miss Gordon hastening to our gate. My heart fluttered as she opened it, and, when she entered my apartment, I had an universal tremor.

“ My dear Miss Boyle, (exclaimed she, without observing my emotion at that instant,) I am so surprised and astonished ; but doubtless you are acquainted with the cause. Mr. Spencer is, it seems, a Mr. Gardner, a gentleman of birth and large fortune, travelling, under a disguised name, in a private manner, to gratify his own curiosity, and evade the notice of others :—you know all this to be sure.”

“ I do, my sweet friend, and was equally surprised with yourself at the discovery of his real name.”

“ But



“But is there not something strange (said she, after a little pause) in this concealed plan, or why has he thought fit to disclose himself now?”

“He has his own private motives for so doing, most certainly, but it is a compliment to us that he will not longer carry on a deception.”

“Why, so I think, (replied she; her eyes sparkling with pleasure;) it is a proof of his esteem, to be sure. Have *you* seen him since the discovery?”

“I have.”

“And did he not assign reasons for his conduct?”

This question puzzled me, but I could not evade it, nor speak an untruth.

“He did, my dear Miss Gordon; but it was in confidence, and therefore I am sure you will excuse me from repeating the information I received. Most probably you will hear it from himself.”

“Ah!”

“ Ah ! (said she, with an air of dejection immediately spread over her countenance,) perhaps not. You are a great favourite, I can see that ; and indeed it is very natural you should be so.” —

She stopped : I was silent for a moment ; then, taking her hand, “ Pardon me, my dear friend, if I take an unwarrantable liberty in seeking your confidence ; if I entreat you to open your heart, and tell me what share Mr. Gardner possesses of *your* esteem. No idle curiosity sways me to penetrate into the secret of your bosom. — My motives arise from a sincere regard for your happiness ; yet I will not impertinently wish to develop any circumstances you are desirous to conceal, therefore only judge favourably, and determine as you please.”

She burst into tears, and, throwing her head on my shoulder, “ You see all the weakness of my mind : I know your penetration has discovered all. You must despise

spise me: I hate my own folly; but I cannot hide from you, that I have weakly suffered my affections to center in Mr. Gardner, when I thought him a man of small fortune and humbler pretensions. I thought too,—I will not deny it, that he viewed me with partiality; but I fear I have deceived myself. The other night, when attending us home, he spoke of you in such terms of high praise, that I am sure they came warm from his heart; and now his confidence in you convinces me I am a lost unhappy girl, and deserve to be so, because I have been weak and indiscreet.”

Tears fell in torrents; I was greatly moved; I kissed her forehead: “Compose yourself, my dear Miss Gordon; you have neither been weak nor indiscreet. It is natural for a good heart to love goodness:—Mr. Gardner has given so many proofs of a good and sensible mind, that it was impossible for you to avoid preferring him.”—

“Ah!



“Ah! then, (said she, interrupting me, and fixing her eyes on mine,) then you must love him also, because you are more capable of distinguishing his merit.”

I felt my face suffused with blushes, and my agitation did not escape her curious looks. “I thought so, (continued she, with a deep sigh;) yes, heaven formed you for each other; poor Emma has nothing to hope, but *indeed* I shall rejoice in *your* felicity.”

It is impossible to give you any idea of the sweet and touching manner in which she uttered those words. I was extremely affected.

“Do not run into an error wounding to your heart, (I replied.) I do not think heaven has formed us for each other. Wait a few days, my dear friend, before you form your judgment, or draw painful conclusions. Your secret is safe in my hands, and you shall find all *my* endeavours, all *my* interest, shall be exerted to procure you happiness.”

Our

Our further conversation became too tender, too affecting, to repeat, for she was perfectly unreserved, and acknowledged her love for Mr. Gardner in such strong and interesting terms, that I am convinced her whole hope of happiness is dependent upon him."

Why, why did he come here in a false character? Never yet did secrecy, or an attempt at imposition, prove advantageous to any one. Curiosity and caprice has led a worthy mind into an error that I much fear will be productive of pain and regret.

This assumed name was not with your concurrence. He acknowledged "that it was on the road he conceived the design of changing his name, that he might not be indebted for any civilities to his introduction as Lord Stanton's friend, but his own endeavours to deserve them, if he felt inclined, when his *curiosity was satisfied*, to remain here; otherwise his sudden and quick return must have appeared wholly unaccountable

countable to Lord Stanton, and strange to us. But, when he came, and found himself *irrefragably* compelled to remain with us; when he had cause to value himself upon the kindness of Mr. Rofs and Mr. Boyle; he then freely communicated his motives, his name, and produced to the latter your letter, at the same time requesting their *secrecy*, that he might use his best endeavours to obtain the esteem of Miss Boyle, independent of any recommendations.—From some circumstances, which had arisen lately, (I have no doubt but he discovered Miss Gordon's partiality, though he was too delicate to mention it,) he thought it highly requisite to appear in his own character to Miss Boyle, and solicit her favour openly."

Such was his declaration to my father, who readily entered into the delicacy of his assigned reasons, and freely forgave "the imposition from its agreeable consequences."

Those



Those were my father's words; I think differently. What he calls delicacy, I term whimsical caprice, and not consistent with the strong and upright mind of Mr. Gardner; yet we are all fallible and liable to error, and one shade in a character may be excused, where so many bright tints appear. Alas! human nature never was, never will be perfect. Our best schemes are defective, and our best-laid plans too often productive of disappointment and regret to ourselves, and those we most wish to benefit by them.

Think not, my beloved friend, that I reflect on, or blame you,—No; I am well assured my happiness was your earnest wish. *Your* share in the business was from the kindest motives; and, had your letter been delivered by *Mr. Gardner*, on his first arrival at Elgin, all might have been well, nor could any expectations have been formed on those letters, which he would not have found himself always at liberty to have withdrawn from.

When

When Miss Gordon had left me, I strolled into the garden, ruminating on the unpleasant business I was likely to be engaged in. Turning round a little shrubbery, I met my father: he saw the perturbation of my spirits, and inquired the cause. I very frankly repeated what had passed between Miss Gordon and myself.

“Excuse me, my dear, (said he,) if I think you have acted wrong in drawing Miss Gordon’s secret from her. However deeply her heart may be engaged, had she learned the development of Mr. Gardner’s name and sentiments at the same time, pride, discretion, and female modesty, would have suppressed her own feelings, and have had their proper weight towards extinguishing a hopeless passion.

“Now the secret is disclosed, the barriers to her inclination broken down, and her hopes and wishes supported by your promises. She has no measures to observe, and, not having a strong judgment, she will encourage

encourage hopes that never will be realized, and ten-fold feel her disappointment.

“ Indeed, indeed, Mary, you are misled by romantic notions of friendship and liberality of sentiment, of self-denial, and such like ideas, that were not at all requisite to be called forth on this occasion. You will repent your false heroism, child ; be assured you will, if you persist in your present plan.”

My father walked on, and left me overwhelmed with vexation and anxiety. Ah ! my dear Mrs. Rowe, your friend has *not* that strong mind, that judgment, your partial friendship depicted in such glowing colours to Mr. Gardner. I am not what he supposes ; for my father, whose heart and head is unquestionably good, thinks I am wrong ; yet my conscience acquits me, and my judgment is not convinced by my father’s opinions.

Is not this an unpardonable error ?—What to-morrow will produce I know not, but the



the events of this day have given me inexpressible vexation. Adieu for the night. Oh ! how I dread to-morrow !

I will retrace the events of this day, now at this “witching hour of the night,” when sleep befriends the happy, but flies the agitated mind ; and well I know no rest will visit me, for I am involved in perplexities, and surrounded with difficulties ; but I will not anticipate.

This morning, on attending the breakfast-table, I found Mr. Rofs with my father, and, after a little preparatory chit-chat, the former congratulated me on the distinguished partiality of Mr. Gardner,—the high esteem he must have entertained for my character, to have led him a journey of such a length, and the delight he expressed in finding me so greatly superior to his highest expectations.

“ You will now, my dear Miss Boyle, (proceeded he, seeing I was quite silent,)  
you

you will now have the power to eradicate every care and sorrow from the mind of your father. To see you so advantageously, so happily, settled in life, with a most unexceptionable man, is a circumstance that has occupied all his wishes, and must now confirm his happiness."

What a flattering idea was this! how did my heart palpitate, and for a moment enjoy the transport of seeing my beloved parent happy! I could not speak, and he proceeded.

"I have the pleasure to hear Mr. Gardner is not displeasing to you: strange if he should, where merit is so obvious, and judgment in you so capable of distinguishing it. Judge, my dear madam, how dear your interest is to me, when I am anxious to promote an union that most probably will deprive me of friends I so very highly value."

He stopped. My father added, "Mr. Gardner is going this morning to visit the Gordons,

Gordons, previous to waiting on you. Finding that Mr. Ross, at your request, had disclosed his name, he thinks it incumbent upon him not to leave a doubt attached to his character and motives, but freely to acquaint them with his sentiments and intentions.”

“Alas! poor Emma, (I exclaimed,) how will she support such an avowal!”

“She can have no right to complain, (returned my father;) no person is to blame if she feels disappointment; a confidence so decided and open must supercede hope, and, if she has any spirit or proper pride, will prevent even an appearance of being hurt by the avowed preference of another.— But I must ask you, Mary, setting Miss Gordon out of the question, have you any objection to Mr. Gardner, or rather, I should ask, do you not highly esteem him?”

“I do, sir; I esteem and prefer the gentleman you mention before any one. I will confess I am gratified by his judgment in my favour;



favour; that I should derive happiness to myself in contributing to his, and ensuring your's; and should Miss Gordon, contrary to my expectations, support Mr. Gardner's declaration with firmness and resignation, he will have no cause to complain of his reception from me, though I shall ever wish there had been no concealments at first.— But, on the other hand, should I find that young lady's peace destroyed, and her mother unhappy,—should my union with Mr. Gardner entail misery upon them, no inducements of self-interest shall influence me to purchase happiness for myself at the expence of others.”

“ We may then fairly conclude (said Mr. Ross) that friendship supercedes love, and that Miss Gordon's regard for *our* friend much surpasses your's for him.”

“ My dear sir, (I replied,) I have not been in the habits of considering Mr. Gardner as a *lover*; I have esteemed him as a worthy character; and, were there no intervening obstacles to our union, I should

vol. III.

I expect

expect *time* before I gave a decided answer. A lover and a friend are often distinct characters, though they ought not to be separated."

"So then, after all, (said my father, looking gravely,) *Miss Gordon* is to be the *first* person consulted. Her happiness, it seems, is of more consequence to you than *mine*."

The tone and words struck me to the heart. "My dearest father, what have you said! I kissed his hand passionately.)—To ensure your happiness, heaven knows how readily I would resign every hope in this life. Do justice to my sentiments."

"My dear child, (said he, interrupting me, and with more tenderness of manner,) I know your heart perfectly, and I know what sacrifices you are capable of making; but, why are *we* to be the sufferers, because a young woman has conceived a partiality, a very natural one, for an amiable young man? Why is Mr. Gardner to be punished, when he never wished, never encouraged, that partiality?"

“ If Mr. Gardner meets with vexation and difficulties, I must be allowed to say he can blame no one but himself. Had his conduct been without disguise, Miss Gordon would not have encouraged a delusive hope that he might be attached to her; but you, sir, have placed the affair in such a point of view, have declared *your* happiness must depend on Mr. Gardner’s being received by me, that I have no more to urge against it.

“ I must, and certainly *shall*, feel much pain and regret, if that young lady and her mother are unhappy through me; and, were I only concerned, *my* felicity only to be consulted, I would submit to every disappointment, rather than add fresh wounds to a suffering heart like Mrs. Gordon’s;—but surely *your* peace, as the alternative, I cannot hesitate a moment what it becomes me to do.”

My father embraced and blessed me;  
Mr. Rofs praised me; but *my* mind did

I 2 not



not partake of equal satisfaction. After breakfast I walked into the garden, and left the gentlemen together. I had been there near an hour, I believe, hardly sensible how the time flew, when the servant came, and delivered to me a note. These were the contents :

“ If you have compassion for an unhappy mother, come to me directly, dear Miss Boyle. My Emma is in fits, and I am distracted.

E. GORDON.”

My sensations I cannot describe. I flew back to the parlour, where I found Mr. Rofs and my father quietly seated at backgammon. I threw the note on the table. “ Read that, dear sir, and see how truly I guessed the effect of this discovery.”

I was preparing to obey the summons.—

“ Mary, (said my father,) *remember me!*—  
Make no promises, for well do I know your  
sensitivity, and how tenacious you are of  
your

*your word: as you value my peace therefore, make no promises."*

Mr. Ross offered to accompany me: I accepted of his attendance, for I thought he might possibly soothe and comfort Mrs. Gordon. We soon arrived there, and found Mrs. Gordon greatly agitated, but the fits were gone off, and poor Emma was on the bed. I entered her apartment with a palpitating heart; she saw me, and held out her hand: I kissed it in silence.

"How good you are (said she to me) to come to our relief!—But you must despise me; I am a poor weak girl,—I did not know how *very weak* till this morning.—Oh! how I have exposed myself!"

Seeing her emotions, I pressed her hand. "My dear Miss Gordon, do not blame yourself; only determine to exert *your* reason and fortitude, and be assured every one loves and esteems you."

"No, no! (said she, with great quickness,) that is impossible. Mr. Gardner

I 3 loves

loves none but *you* ; he has told me so, and *me* he must despise,—think of my folly and weakness, when he explained the cause of his coming to Elgin, and said he had the honour of being permitted by Mr. Boyle to solicit *your* favour, on which his happiness depended, I felt a sudden sickness seize on my heart. I rose to leave the room, but, before I got to the door, I sunk giddy and speechless on the floor.

“ I was soon recovered ; but, when I beheld the agitations of my mother, and the embarrassed looks of Mr. Gardner, my senses again forsook me, and I lost all remembrance of any thing further, till about an hour since, when I found myself here, my mother weeping, and Mr. Gardner gone.

“ She told me she had sent for you, otherwise I confess shame would have prevented me from wishing to see you. Now you know all, and must see I have, by an unpardonable weakness, rendered myself despicable



cable in Mr. Gardner's eyes, and even you, while you pity, must condemn me."

Agitated and trembling, she spoke quick and faintly. I was extremely concerned to see her so affected. Every thing that friendship and esteem could suggest, I said to quiet her disorder; but the idea of being despised by Mr. Gardner seemed to dwell upon her mind, and impede every effort of mine to comfort her.

"Ah! (said she once,) you will soon be the happiest of women; he adores you. You will go to England; poor Emma will then be forgotten, and left to pine away in this obscure corner, unthought of and unmourned."

"Say not so, my dear Miss Gordon.—Many happy days are yet in store for *you*. Doubt not but you will meet with an amiable man, more congenial with *your* own feelings. Believe me, this attachment to Mr. Gardner is but a transient one. Miss Gordon has too much pride, must estimate

her

her own worth more justly, than to bestow her heart on a man whose affections may be said to have been engaged before he had the honour of *seeing her*.

“ His own story must tell you, that he was prepossessed in *my* favour ; and, had he met an angel, most probably the partial and flattering idea he had conceived of me would have rendered him blind, even to divine charms.

“ I assure *you*, I feel as little cause to value myself upon his declared preference, as you can have to be mortified at it, for his senses were beguiled, and his eyes hood-winked.”

“ But *you* will have him ?” cried she hastily.

“ *That* must depend upon *my* father, (I replied.) If I can make no reasonable objection, and it is his pleasure, I must comply.”

“ Objection ! (repeated she,) heavens ! what objection can there be ? You do love him ;

him; I am sure you do; but either not so foolishly as I love him, or *you* have more command over *your* feelings than I have."

"That command, my dear Emma, you may easily acquire. Respect yourself; assume that degree of self-consequence you are entitled to, and you will soon think less of Mr. Gardner. Young minds are but too ready to *fancy* they are in love, when often it is a meer idea their weakness indulges, without the least effort on their part to compel it. Be assured, my dear Emma, a sensible mind can at any time crush a growing inclination, or conquer an improper one, if they exert resolution, and persevere with fortitude. Let the effort be made; determine to obey the dictates of reason, and what is generally called *love* will very soon fade from the imagination; weakness only nourishes it.

"Or suppose otherwise, that an affection is justified by the merits of the object,—that it really has taken deep root in the heart, will a discreet delicate young woman

I. 5. persevere



persevere in an affection which the object of it cannot or will not return? Certainly not; pride and conscious worth will assist prudence in changing such sentiments as ought not to be indulged, into that proper esteem merit has an undoubted right to claim from justice and discernment. Let me beseech you then, my dear Miss Gordon, for your own sake, for your mother's, whose happiness is in your hands, and from the regard you owe to all your friends, to struggle against this weakness,—to assume that dignity and sweetness in your manners that conciliates every one's esteem, and let Mr. Gardner believe your illness was accidental, and not caused by your preferable regard for him. The best of men have foibles, have vanity; never let it be gratified at your expence."

"And from whence (said she calmly) do you derive all this knowledge of the human heart? *you*, who, I have understood, must have been almost as much secluded as myself

myself from the gay world, and have so little advantage of me in age?"

"From my earliest youth, (I replied,) I was the selected, the constant, companion of my father. I did *not* experience those blameable indulgencies which fond mothers are too apt to bestow on favourite children. I was early accustomed to little disappointments and inattentions; and, as I advanced to riper age, I had a governess, the most estimable of women, who taught me to regulate my passions, improved every seed of virtue, and those faults she could not wholly eradicate she made me ashamed of; and, conscious of many imperfections, I endeavour to keep a constant watch over my foibles, that they may not counteract the dictates of reason.

"The best of us, my dear friend, have many deficiencies, are guilty of innumerable errors. I am but too sensible of mine; and, were I called forth to any very great trials, might possibly feel the difficulty of reducing theory to practice as much

as another ; yet I hope I should be capable of the effort, and that is always a great point gained."

" You would almost persuade me (said she, faintly smiling) that I impose upon myself, and suffer from a chimera of my own brain. You would have me become a heroine ; but, alas ! I am a weak girl."

" I do not believe it, (I replied.) You judge erroneously of your own powers.—Come, try to get up, and go down. Consider how greatly you will delight your mother, and remove the impression you fear Mr. Gardner has received. It is better far that he should respect and esteem you, than entertain sentiments of pity and compassion ;—such sentiments always imply a superiority in the first person, and are a degradation to the other."

" You are right, (said she, hastily rising, though every nerve trembled ;) taking my arm, let us go down ; I ought not to grieve my mother."

Some



Some hartshorn being on the table, I gave her a few drops in water, and we descended to the parlour, where Mrs. Gordon and Mr. Rofs were deeply engaged in conversation.

The former gave a cry of mingled joy and surprise at seeing us. Mr. Rofs advanced, and took Miss Gordon's hand to conduct her to a seat. "I rejoice to see you, my young friend: I hope you are better."

"Very much so, I thank you, (she replied, with some firmness.) I was oddly seized this morning, probably from walking in the damp air before breakfast; (she *did* walk.) The sickness is now gone off, and I dare say will not return."

Her mother looked all astonishment from her to me; Mr. Rofs, with an uneasy eye of curiosity; but we staid some time chatting on indifferent subjects, in which she occasionally joined, though a general weakness seemed to pervade her whole frame.—  
When

When we rose to take leave, " Shall I see you in the evening ?" asked she.

" Most certainly, (I replied ;) I shall call in the hope of seeing you quite well."

" I will do as well as I can, (answered she, with an expressive look,) and you must be my physician."

" I am happy to find the alarm of this morning proves of less consequence than we apprehended, (said Mr. Rofs.) Miss Gordon appears to be tolerably well."

Knowing how sincerely this good man was interested for us all, I had no reserves, but repeated to him the chief part of our conversation, and had the happiness to hear him approve very much of the method I had taken to alarm her pride and convince her reason, which we both hoped would have a happy effect.

Arriving home, we found Mr. Gardner with my father ; and, after fitting a short time together, the latter, with Mr. Rofs, withdrew

withdrew to the garden, leaving me not a little perplexed at the awkwardness of my situation. He lost no time in availing himself of their absence, but went over the old ground, apologizing for the singularity of his conduct, which he greatly apprehended might appear in an unfavourable point of view, and prejudice his cause, if I would not allow much for the fallibility of human nature.

“ He presumed not (he said) to expect my favour without having some claims to deserve it. He wished to appear now in his own character, to be allowed as a candidate for my esteem : he could appreciate no merit to himself for his attachment to me, much less would he wound my delicacy by such encomiums as common minds would feel gratified in. Miss Boyle was superior to praise or adulation, he therefore did not address her as a goddess, but as the most amiable of women, whose approbation he was solicitous to obtain, as essentially requisite to his happiness. Might  
he



he presume to ask, if my affections were disengaged ?”

I suppressed the agitations of my mind, and the confusion occasioned by this question, tolerably well ; and, assuming as much composure as possible, I frankly replied, “ I have never yet, sir, received the addresses of any gentleman, from which you may infer *my affections* are disengaged, though possibly I may have a preferable esteem for some more than others.”

“ Undoubtedly, madam ; — such a preference as a mind like your’s must feel for a worthy character. You will not refuse me permission then to remain at Elgin, and an opportunity of cultivating that preferable esteem, if, on being better known, I should appear to deserve it.”

“ Your stay at Elgin, sir, must depend upon yourself. The friend of my family will be always entitled to *my* attentions ; and, if I except one little peculiarity of character, Mr. Gardner appears to have claims

on

on the score of his own merits, that will justify his expectation of favour from others."

He made me a very fine bow and compliment, not with the air of a man satisfied with himself, but rather with a glow of pleasure resulting from the transport of receiving a favour he was doubtful of. I resolved to try him farther.

"You saw our friends, the Gordons, this morning?"

"Yes, madam, (he replied, with a confused air,) I did, and I think Miss Gordon is not very well."

"The consequence of a morning's ramble before breakfast, which brought on a faint sickness, that alarmed the tenderness of her mother; but I had the pleasure to leave her perfectly recovered."

"I am rejoiced to hear it, (said he, in a tone of animation;) she is a very good and a very pleasing young woman: I greatly esteem Mrs. Gordon and her children. The lieutenant-

lieutenant is a worthy fellow, and I have no doubt but he will be an honour to his profession."

As I thought our tête-à-tête had been sufficiently long, and saw he avoided any particular mention of Miss Gordon, I proposed following my father, to which he could make no objection. When we came near to the gentlemen, I observed they viewed him and me alternately, and I suppose were not dissatisfied with the air of his countenance, for my father looked uncommonly cheerful,—I left them together.

In the evening I walked to Mrs. Gordon's; Mr. Ross promised to call and escort me home. I was not a little concerned to find Mrs. Gordon extremely melancholy, and Emma supporting her head on a pillow, her face uncommonly pale.

"How is this, my sweet friend? I flattered myself I should meet you quite recovered."

"I



“ I hoped so too, (said she, languidly smiling ;) but the spirits you had raised quickly subsided without your supporting presence.”

“ I will not accept of a compliment, my dear Emma, you cannot mean.—Have you not the tenderest of mothers; should you not, for *her* sake, either endeavour to be well, or have such proper advice as may soon restore you ?”

“ Heaven knows (said she sighing) I would do any thing to make my mother easy. I am not ill, though I cannot be well I fear.”

“ If you are not ill, certainly every thing else depends upon yourself. To permit lowness and dejection to steal upon your spirits is a weakness you must struggle to overcome.”

“ Oh ! how easy to give advice with a heart at ease !”

The exclamation surprised me; it was not generous.—Mrs. Gordon left the room greatly agitated.

“ Do

“Do *you* suppose then, Miss Gordon, (said I,) loving you as I do, that *I* have a heart at ease when *you* are unhappy? Do me more justice. Did your peace of mind depend upon *me*, be assured there is no sacrifice I would scruple to make for that purpose; but, my dear friend, *you* only have the power.”

“Ah! (said she, interrupting me, with an impatient air,) I have no power at all. This morning you alarmed my pride; you made me ashamed of my weakness; but, when you left me, when I considered you were gone to receive the addresses of the most amiable of men, I could not command my feelings; the consequence was that my secret is now known to my mother, and she can give me no comfort. I have no resolution: I believe, if you marry him, I shall pray for your mutual happiness, but I shall not live long to see or hear of it; I am sure I shall not.”

“I am very much concerned, my dear Emma, to hear that you entertain such weak ideas.”

ideas. It is possible I may never marry Mr. Gardner. Whatever favourable sentiments I have for that gentleman, I shall not be hasty in deciding my opinion of them.—Time must convince my judgment before I permit fancy or the eye to mislead my heart.”

“Indeed, *Miss Boyle*, your heart spoke in his favour long ago; I could see *that*, notwithstanding you sought to hide it.”

“You give me credit then for my *endeavours to hide it*; and be assured, whatever my heart might feel, had Mr. Gardner chosen you as the object of his affections, I could have rejoiced in your happiness without complaining, or dying of despair.”

“Such romantic follies are pardonable in a simple uninformed girl, but a young woman, liberally educated, with but a *small* share of sense and discretion, ought to know better, and not permit a temporary disappointment to lord it over her reason.

We



We may feel pain in the exertion of fortitude, but I am thoroughly persuaded perseverance will conquer."

"It is a fine thing to be a philosopher, and mighty easy to *talk* about fortitude, when the practice of it is not necessary."

This was spoken in a tone that hurt me.

"My dear Emma, you are not kind or generous. I know not indeed the strength of my own mind, and the heart may sometimes deceive us, but be assured I would, if called to a trial, make the effort I recommended to you; I see however, that my advice is intrusive and useless; my friendship may also be troublesome: let us then drop the subject; henceforth I will take no liberties but such as you please to allow me."

She burst into tears. "I thought one great event would engross all your attentions, and that my friendship would be of no value now."

"You

“ You are unkind and capricious, my dear Emma : you wrong yourself and me by this petulance. How have I deserved it ? what has occasioned so great a revolution in your sentiments since the morning ?—when I left you impressed, as I thought, with ideas more worthy of yourself, and more just to me.”

“ Pardon me, (said she,) forgive me, my dear Miss Boyle ; I am petulant, weak, and unjust ; one moment I resolve to meet Mr. Gardner as usual, to assume consequence to myself ; the next, I think him the most amiable of men, with a tender, generous, and benevolent heart ; and that possibly, had he not known *you*, he might have preferred me ;—then I hate you for a short time, (indeed I do,) though I ought to esteem and love you.—What can I do, when you see my heart is so ungovernable ?”

“ Let me remark one thing to you, my dear friend, that must set aside the idea of rivalryship. Had not Mr. Gardner been possessed

possessed in my favour, he never would have visited Elgin ; consequently, had he not known me, it was impossible he should have been acquainted with *you*, and that *same* prejudice, which brought him here, rendered him blind to your superior charms. Most sincerely I wish this mischievous man had remained in England.—You look incredulous, Emma, but I am sincere. I could not have regretted one I did not know, and, content with your friendship, I had not a wish for lovers.”

“ Well, (said she,) when you talk to me, then I feel better ; you can persuade me to any thing.—But will you satisfy me in one point ?”

“ In any thing that depends upon myself only, you may command me.”

“ Do you not love Mr. Gardner ?”

“ *I believe I do* ; at least, it is certain I prefer him greatly to any man I ever saw ; that I think highly of his heart and his understanding ; that I should feel no repugnance



nance to give him my hand, did a coincidence of circumstances authorize me to do so, after being some time longer acquainted with him."

"Then you do not mean to marry him immediately?"

"Surely not. It would be extremely indecorous to hurry on a marriage before we are perfectly acquainted with each other, in the light he now presents himself. Let me entreat you, my dear Emma, to drop the subject now and for ever. Let us meet as usual, whatever may be the event. Recal your spirits and cheerfulness; think what you owe to your mother, and do not relapse into weakness and irresolution the moment I leave you."

She was about to reply, when Mrs. Gordon returned, accompanied by Mr. Rofs. He congratulated Emma on her amended health; and, as she had again raised her head, and looked tolerably composed, it passed very well.

I found Mr. Rofs and Mrs. Gordon had a long conversation. Her melancholy originated, not so much from her daughter's indispositions, as from a letter she had received of her son's embarkation, which greatly affected her. She spoke very freely to the good man on Miss Gordon's attachment to Mr. Gardner, and lamented the *strange whim* that had conducted him to Elgin.

Mr. Rofs proposed a plan, which she promised to consider of. His daughters, who had been on a visit to him the preceding year, and were of course acquainted with the Gordons, had several times invited them to Inverness; he thought, if the young lady could be prevailed upon to accept the invitation at this period, it might give a different turn to her sentiments by the variety of objects she would meet with in that gay town.

Whether Miss Gordon will accede to this proposal I know not, but I am extremely uneasy

uneasy at her situation, and hurt by her petulance, and I must call it *injustice* to me. I wish Mr. Gardner had not been induced to come here, for I see plainly poor Emma has not fortitude enough to support his preference of another, and I am sure that if I am persuaded to marry him, and she is wretched, *I* never can be happy.

Thus, you see, I am not a little perplexed by the occurrences of the day, and the doubtful circumstances yet to come. Good night, my dear friend. Whatever may be the event, your kind and generous motives exonerate *you* from all blame.

Ever your affectionate

MARY BOYLE.

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## LETTER X.

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MISS BOYLE TO MRS. ROWE.

HOW often are we punished by the grant of our wishes ! Last night how earnestly I longed to hear from you some news of my sister ! This morning I received a letter that convulsed every nerve, and so greatly affected me, that my officious, but affectionate Patty flew down stairs to call her master, without my having the power to prevent her.

When my father came up, he was little less alarmed, and hastily demanded the cause.

cause. I was recovering : happily the letter did not meet his eye ; I told him I was better, and would account to him by and by for my indisposition.

“ You have a letter from Mrs. Rowe ? ”

“ Yes, sir ; and in the course of the day you shall know its contents. ”

He looked uneasy, but pressed me no farther.

Good God ! what a letter !— My dear lost Caroline ! into what an abyss of misery have vanity and ambition plunged her !— The insidious monster that has destroyed her is as contemptible as wicked. I scarce know what I write, but I will endeavour, if possible, to quiet my beating heart and trembling fingers, while I relate the painful effects of your truly-diffreſsing intelligence.

When I had a little recovered from the shock that had taken me off my guard, I began to consider in what manner I could prepare a father to bear a recital so wound-

K 3 ing

ing to every feeling, so infinitely more painful than the stroke of death. Our good and worthy comforter Mr. Ros was my only resource; and, however mortifying the communication, with him I had no reserves. I watched for his customary morning visit, and fortunately he came, while my father had strolled out on the hill.

I put your letter into his hand, and besought his assistance to calm the grief and agitation of a wounded parent. He read it with surprise and concern; and, without making any comments, "I will follow Mr. Boyle, (said he.) My dear good young lady, keep up your spirits to support your father."

It was near two hours before they returned. What I suffered in the interval cannot be expressed; much less can I describe the dreadful scene that followed their entrance into the house

"All else (cried my dear father) I could have borne! Sickness, poverty, and death, are



are far lighter evils than the dishonour of a child, than a depraved corrupted heart !”

But I cannot repeat what passed. The heart-wounding lamentations pierced my very soul, and drew tears from our worthy friend. My poor father blessed Lord Stanton a thousand times for not abandoning her, for not giving her up to infamy.

“Such, (said he, in bitterness of reflection,) such is the end of all those long concerted schemes to gratify ambition and vanity ; such the consequences of my weakness and injustice, of an unjust partiality, which has proved the ruin of its object, by throwing her into temptations she had neither prudence nor principles to withstand.”

Mr. Ross promised to remain with us for the day, and I gladly retired to my apartment, that I might be at liberty to indulge my own painful sensations, without adding to a deeply-afflicted parent's.

Mr. Gardner called soon after. I declined seeing him, but Patty informed me that he staid above two hours with my father; most likely he had heard from Lord Stanton. Would to heaven I were with the unhappy Caroline! Vanity, that ruling passion of her soul, has proved her destruction. I know, I am sure, she had not a bad heart. She had many good traits, but that one predominant folly swallowed up every good and virtuous sentiment.— Poor Caroline! alas! how short-lived her triumph! how swift is the progress of vice, when dissipation and vanity have broken down the barriers of modesty and virtue!

Where are now her admiring friends, her numerous followers, that looked out to admire? now gathered in groups, repeating the scandalous tale, with a thousand false aggravations, they abuse, despise, and degrade, the object so lately adored by one sex, and imitated by the other! What a lesson to a reflecting mind!—a lesson neither  
new

new nor uncommon, but the sure consequence that always attends a woman who forgets the respect due to herself.

I would not pass such another day for worlds. I have now left my father for the night. Sleep will not visit my eyes, neither can rest belong to me. Mr. Gardner it seems was deeply affected. He esteems Lord Stanton greatly, but Mr. Ross observed he was more grieved than surprised, and from thence deduced that he had *known* my sister's conduct was reprehensible.

I know too well that he thought so. How ardently do I now wish I had shewn all her letters to my father! Desirous to hide her follies and guard his peace, I concealed such intelligence as, if communicated, might have changed Lord Stanton's plans, and preserved her; but the reflection comes too late now, and only proves that secrecy and concealments can never tend to any good purpose. My motives were good, but I deceived my father into a false confidence that

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she conducted herself as became the wife of Lord Stanton, and the event proves "that we should never do evil, that good may come of it."

Mr. Gardner proposed, I find, that we should all depart for England immediately. Mr. Rofs advised waiting for the promised letter from Lord Stanton, or further intelligence from you; and his opinion decided for my father, who will, I am persuaded, feel great regret to quit Elgin, should it be necessary for us to do so.

My dear Mrs. Rowe, let us adore that gracious and beneficent Being who dispenses the good and evil of this life alternately, that we may neither proudly vaunt in our prosperity, nor sink under our troubles!—My dear father has received a letter with such delightful intelligence this morning, that it has at least occasioned a suspension of grief, and turned his thoughts, for a short time, on a more pleasing subject.

It came from his agent in town. Mr. Cranfield is arrived from Italy, and, after being indefatigable in his inquiries after us, was sent to the agent, where he gained every information he wished for. He hastened to see our dear Frederic, whose friend and master had that morning expired. The poor boy was in the act of writing to his father, when Mr. Cranfield desired to see him, and, being told what had happened, took him away to his own lodgings. What follows I write in the gentleman's own words.

“ Mr. Cranfield came to me the following morning, Mr. Frederic with him.—“ I understand, sir, Mr. Boyle has resigned all the remains of his fortune into trustees' hands, for the benefit of this young gentleman, and now lives upon the little moiety of his wife's fortune, which devolved to his daughter.”

“ I told him he had been rightly informed.

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“ Very

“Very well, sir. Then know it is my intention to secure to Mr. Frederic a larger sum than appears to be left for him, and to insist upon this trust being withdrawn, and the father still retaining possession of his small fortune. Miss Boyle also is entitled to my consideration.”

“Pardon me, sir, (said I,) are you related to the family?”

“I am connected with it, sir, and inherit a large property per chance, which, in early life, the late Mrs. Boyle had reason to expect would devolve upon her.”

“You are uncommonly generous, sir, permit me to say.”

“No, sir, I am only just. I had once a father, brothers, and sisters; the two first no longer exist. My sisters are married; neither has children; I have taken care of them for their lives. My fortune is more, much more, than sufficient for myself. Just expectations ought never to be disappointed; yet, while my father and brother lived, I had



I had no right to give from them. *Their* claims were superior in the *opinion* of the *world* to others, though possibly that was never mine; but I wished not to disoblige my connexions, nor appear singular. Now I am at liberty to judge for myself; one half of what I possess shall become the property of Miss Boyle and this young gentleman: after my death, my sisters will find themselves intitled to the remainder."

- "Good God! fir, this is the highest act of generosity I ever knew!"

"I am sorry to hear it. Justice and generosity ought to regulate every man's actions. I see no merit in what I do, because, if I acted otherwise, I should err against the dictates of my conscience. You will therefore make deeds such as I shall direct, and that with all possible speed; mean time, till you hear from his father, I shall request this young gentleman's guardian's permission that he may remain with me:—a request that was readily granted.

"In

“In two days I completed the deed.—Six hundred a year is settled on Mr. Frederic now, with a reversion of two thousand at the death of Mr. Cranfield ; and, “if he should be weak enough to marry, and, what is still more improbable, have heirs,” then Mr. Frederic is to have but one thousand a year ;—a bond for three thousand pounds to Miss Boyle, to be paid on demand, absolutely in her own power, and given in trust to me.”

Such were the principal contents of the letter which threw my father into great agitations, and really alarmed me ; for his mind being weakened by vexation, and his body debilitated from want of rest and nourishment, he was but little capable of supporting the extremes of joy or sorrow. For my own part, I was truly overjoyed to see him restored to the possession of a decent competence independent of me, which I well know has hung heavy upon his mind, for he has a thousand times lamented his folly

folly in suffering his property to have been idly dissipated, and reduced to the necessity of *wronging* his child.

Heaven knows it was my pride and joy to partake with him, whether in indigence or in wealth, and never, but for his sake, and the purposes of benevolence, did I wish for any addition to what we possess.

But tell me, my dear Mrs. Rowe, if you do not adore this Mr. Cranfield? What an enviable mind does he pourtray. Every virtue must inhabit his bosom, and conscious worth must glow in his countenance, as it is displayed in his actions! Our dear Frederick too has a benefactor and friend. Ah! why must I turn my eye from those bright tints of happiness, to view the impending, lowering cloud that threatens to overshadow our delights, and leave but a temporary gleam of sunshine! Must the cup of life be so filled with mixed ingredients of joy and sorrow, that the moment the former



mer plays upon the edge, it is dashed off by the bubbling of the latter? Too sure it is so, and were it not for the hope that the black drop may quickly be dispersed in turn, who could support the calamities and evils human life is subject to! For some time, my father seemed engrossed by this pleasing and unexpected intelligence; but, when surprise and joy began to subside, a heavy sigh informed me that a recollection most painful now took its turn, and clouded the bright prospects we had contemplated with such delight.

“That the generous Mr. Cranfield has removed the anxiety which preyed upon my mind, for the situation of you and your brother, I am most truly grateful; but, my dear Mary, he can neither restore lost honour, nor bid me look up with the confidence and exultation of a happy father. If we go into the world again, I must retire in the midst of it to solitude. I will not have kingdoms separate me from you and my  
Frederic,

Frédéric, and my children will now be enabled to support a more respectable appearance;—but for me what remains?—retirement, accompanied by shame and sorrow.”

“Have you then but *one* child, sir? (said I, interrupting him;) have you no one whose tenderness and duty may divert your mind, and scatter roses to cover the thorns that are thrown in the paths of happiness? Do not, my dear father, indulge despair.—Kiss the rod of affliction, and trust that Almighty Goodness will proportion your strength to your trials.

“My poor sister has erred, greatly erred; her crime will be her punishment. Conscience will smite worse than a two-edged sword. Ah! pity her, sir; her days will be full of sorrow, till a true penitence may be allowed by the charitable mind to expiate her offence; and who is there that has not something to repent of? and who shall deny forgiveness to the contrite heart?—Fear not, dear sir; she will yet be entitled to your compassion and pardon.”

My

My father shook his head, but made no reply. Mr. Gardner entered the room, and the letter we had received was communicated to him.

“Mr. Cranfield is a worthy character, and challenges our best esteem; but my dear Miss Boyle wants not, I hope, such a trifling addition of money as cannot enhance her value in the eyes of any man, and I am convinced her mind is superior to receiving a favour that must pain her with the weight of the obligation.”

“Mr. Cranfield (said my father) places his intended kindness in a different point of view; he conceives that he is performing an act of *justice*, and that *himself* is the *obliged* person in our acceptance.”

“I have no doubt, sir, (replied Mr. Gardner,) but such are his sentiments; and certainly there is no degradation in the acceptance of property you had once every claim to expect would have been all your own, but for an accidental circumstance;—but pardon me, Miss Boyle.”——

“Permit



“Permit me to interrupt you, Mr. Gardner, (said I.) From what I know, from what I have seen, of Mr. Cranfield, he will be gratified and made happy by the plan he proposes; and I think my father would be fastidious and unkind, as well as unjust to his son, if he refused the generous man the pleasure of doing what he conceives honour and justice demand. Frederic will be the person benefited; my father will only resume his own fortune for his life. For myself, I have enough, nor will I accept of a *donation* from any man. The bond made to me I shall assuredly decline; but it shall be in such a way as I hope will not displease a good and generous man:—of that hereafter.”

A long conversation ensued, not necessary to repeat; and, as my father determined shortly to return to England, to settle his affairs, and to fix on some plan for Frederic, yet but sixteen, we both persuaded Mr. Gardner to leave us now, that he might  
carry

carry consolation to his friend Lord Stanton, who is unacquainted with his journey to Scotland, and who at this time must feel a void in his heart friendship only can fill up.—

It was with extreme reluctance that he consented to go alone, but my father urged it with so much earnestness, backed by so many cogent reasons, that at length he acquiesced.

“Must I then leave Miss Boyle, *now*, when my fate hangs upon her lips, and my happiness depends upon her favour, without being allowed to cultivate her esteem, or do away the impression that an appearance of duplicity may rest upon her mind to my disadvantage?—Indeed, sir, the sacrifice is great that you require.”

“We have no right, sir, to *exact* any sacrifices from you, (I replied gravely.) We only conjure you to do an act of friendship, I should suppose must be congenial to your own feelings. I have no opinion of that

that selfish passion which would narrow the heart, and detach it from other duties. A liberal enlarged mind is capacious enough to admit of love and friendship; and the woman you honour with your esteem cannot deserve it, if she would regret your absence on such an occasion, or if her regard for you did not increase in proportion to the readiness with which you fly to console an unhappy friend,—even if that friend were not nearly connected with her own family.”

There was something in this speech that pleased him, I suppose, for his whole countenance grew animated. He kissed my hand, called me his “charming monitress,” and declared, that, having no will but mine, and his heart being divided between me and Lord Stanton, though the division was not exactly equal, yet my wishes thrown into the scale would carry him immediately to Stanton-Place in quest of his friend: he hoped Mr. Boyle would not long defer his departure,



departure, since he was not permitted to stay and accompany him."

It was settled that he should leave us the following day, and that Mr. Rofs should mention his design to the Gordons, previous to taking leave. Mr. Rofs coming in, I left them together.

I am very apprehensive of the consequences, when Mr. Gardner leaves Elgin. Miss Gordon, as I have before remarked, has not a strong mind, though a good understanding. Her mother will rather soften her by tenderness than exert her powers of reason to strengthen her fortitude, for she dotes on her daughter as the foothier of her sorrows, and her only friend and companion.

My hope is they may be prevailed upon to visit Inverness. I am now going to Mrs. Gordon's, in a very unfit disposition to encounter poor Emma's melancholy, for I have an oppressive grief at my heart, which  
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the contents of your letter have fixed beyond every attempt to remove or disguise.

I am returned, rather more tranquillised. I am relieved from part of my anxiety respecting Miss Gordon. I found her much better to my great surprise, for Mr. Rofs had acquainted them that Mr. Gardner was suddenly recalled to London, and that, in all probability, he would see Elgin no more. She seemed much shocked for a moment, then hastily asked, "Does Mr. and Miss Boyle go also?"

"No, (he replied;) they have no such intention. You will see your friend by and by; she is not very well, and has a dejection of spirits, that it will be kind in you to remove by a recovery of your own cheerfulness."

My dear Mrs. Rowe, how selfish is human nature! I am convinced that Miss Gordon loved me, yet it is too plain that her regard for Mr. Gardner has narrowed her heart, and taught her that selfish passion

sion which could feel gratification in supposing that *I* was disappointed also, and that Mr. Gardner had changed his sentiments.

“ Ah ! (said she,) I fancy Mr. Gardner is a capricious mortal. Whim brought him this long journey, and now some new frolic carries him back again.—Perhaps some former mistress has recalled him.”

“ How is that consistent, Emma, with his declaration to you a day or two ago ?”

“ Dear madam, why he has altered his sentiments, I suppose. However, he has behaved ill to make *poor Miss Boyle* fancy he really was so much attached to her.”

Mr. Rofs was surprised and displeased with her readiness to question Mr. Gardner’s honour and affection for me. He found some difficulty in repressing his inclination to undeceive her, and therefore soon took leave.

I met him on his return, and he repeated this conversation, which I really attributed to



to false spirits in Miss Gordon, to hide her real concern, and supposed the whole weight of the latter would fall upon me. This idea added to the agitation of my mind; and, when I entered the house, I observed strong surprise in the countenance of both mother and daughter. I believe I looked ill enough at the moment.

Miss Gordon was better, yet weak and languid. She rose, and received me most affectionately. "My dear Miss Boyle, how good of you to come here *now*, when it is too plain you are ill, or unhappy yourself."

"Indeed (I replied) you are not mistaken; *I am* not well; but much pleased to see you better."

"I hear Mr. Gardner is going to *leave* you, (said she abruptly;) pray what cause does he assign for it?"

"The indisposition of an old friend, whose situation calls for his immediate assistance."

The subject affected me; my voice was low and tremulous. She observed me with earnestness. "Have you refused him?" asked she with quickness.

"No."

"What, then, you have *accepted* him, and he returns again, I suppose."

"Indeed I have not, nor does he, I believe, think of returning here."

"This is very strange. He must be a very whimsical being to come such a journey to satisfy an odd fancy, pretend such violent attachment to you, and then, because a friend is sick, set off in a hurry, without even intending to return."

My spirits were exceedingly weak, the *cause* of Mr. Gardner's departure was painful to me; the self-deception of Miss Gordon, which I tacitly encouraged, I reproached myself for; and the real unconcern in her looks and manner, when she might naturally suppose I felt mortified and ill treated;

ed; altogether oppressed me so much, that I burst into tears.

These were the first tears Emma had ever seen me shed since the melancholy catastrophe of Morgan's death.

"Indeed, my dear Miss Boyle, I am sorry for you, but you see *now* how much easier it is to *advise* others than to *bear* yourself. "Theory and practice" is not the same thing, though you thought so, and now we must comfort each other, though perhaps *your efforts* will soon accomplish *your cure*.

"My mother (she continued) has accepted of an invitation, repeatedly made, to pay a visit to the daughters of Mr. Rofs, at Inverness. The change may possibly do me good, yet I shall be sorry to leave you at *this time*."

Can you conceive what I felt, whilst she was thus retorting my own expressions upon me in such an unfeeling manner? I scarcely

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believed my senses. Gracious father ! that jealousy, and its attendant mean passions, should dwell in the breast of an amiable girl, and in a few days destroy an affection that seemed fixed from a congeniality of sentiment.

I was really overpowered by the painful reflections that rose to my mind, and for a moment thought that I ought to undeceive her ; but then how was I to account for the present occurrences and our future plan, without developing the cause, or inventing other circumstances ? The last I *could not do*, and the first I had no right to entrust with any one, when disgraceful to a sister and her family. She saw my agitation and embarrassment, and saw it, I think, with an air of triumph.

“ Mr. Gardner intends to call here this evening, and take leave. I wonder what he can say for himself : I hope I shall behave tolerable well ; yet, I confess, all things considered,

considered, I am not sorry he is going.—When we see him no more, nor are *entangled* by his *insinuating* manners, I hope we shall both recover our spirits.”

I was really astonished at her volubility and my own taciturnity. I thought we had changed characters; she was now my *monitrice*; but, believe me, my dear friend, I considered her with pity and regret,—a good heart with a weak mind, the sport of the present passion; yet certainly she had in this instance exhibited more spirit than I supposed her capable of, for I believed her to be placid and soft as a May morning.

I endeavoured to compose myself, and recover my spirits, hoped she would find the intended tour a very pleasant one, and the event answer all her wishes.

She thanked me, and said, I should see her before she left Elgin.

Mrs. Gordon came in, and saluted me most affectionately; “wished I could persuade myself to leave my father in the care

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of Mr. Rofs, and accompany them to Inverness."

I was very grateful for her kindness, which I know is sincere. She is a truly-amiable woman, whom I shall be sorry to lose. Her dear daughter has not had so many severe trials, nor I fear has she the fortitude to support such; heaven grant therefore that my dear Mrs. Gordon may see her Emma advantageously settled, and her very worthy son return to her with honour and health. I am much interested in their happiness, nor can this change in Miss Gordon abate in the least my affection for her. I consider it as the infirmity of human nature, and mischievous man as the cause.

This evening Mr. Gardner, accompanied by Mr. Rofs, is gone to take leave at the cottage. He would not go alone, nor am I sorry, as it may check Miss Gordon from exposing herself, or asking such questions as he would feel a difficulty to satisfy.

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In this pause in our situation I will dispatch my packet. Most anxiously we wait to hear from you or Lord Stanton; at present my father is miserable, and your friend very unhappy.

Adieu, my dear Mrs. Rowe. Rich in virtue and goodness, how happy are you! Ah! that the poor dear Caroline had attended to your precepts and example! then might she have exulted in the felicity she has now forfeited for ever,—painful reflection, which wounds me to the soul! Once more adieu.

Ever your affectionate

MARY BOYLE.

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## LETTER XI.

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MISS BOYLE TO MRS. ROWE.

FIVE days have passed since I closed my last letter, three of which have been the most painful of my life. My beloved father has been at the last extremity. O my dear Mrs. Rowe! a paralytic stroke that night I sent off my packet threw me into a state of distraction!

Mr. Gardner and Mr. Rofs returned from Mrs. Gordon's. The conversation on parting I have totally forgotten: I only recollect that the former said little of the daughter,

ter, but much of the mother. They had not been with us a quarter of an hour, when my dear parent complained of thirst, and Mr. Rofs advised a glass of ale, in which he would join. The ale was brought; the former took up the glass; it dropped from his hand; as he was conveying it to his lips. I thought it accidental, when, in the same moment, Mr. Gardner caught him as he was falling from his chair, to all appearance lifeless.

Never shall I forget the agony of that moment! Mr. Rofs, with an agility scarcely credible, flew away for the surgeon, while we were laying him upon a sofa. I then found he lived, but that one side was dead, and devoid of feeling. "Do not alarm yourself, (said Mr. Gardner,) it is only a fit; he will soon recover."

All the remedies we had in the house were applied, but they were fruitless. The doctor came, and declared it was a paralytic affection. We got down some strong me-

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dicated



dedicated wine, and he shortly opened his eyes, but one side of his face was much drawn.

He was conveyed to bed, and for three nights and two days existed with very little appearance of life. Yesterday, gracious heaven be thanked ! he shewed signs of recollection, and attempted to speak, though very inarticulately. He gradually mended from that time, and this evening his face has recovered its form, his side some feeling, and we can comprehend what he says. The doctor assures me he is out of danger ; God grant it may be so.

I need not attempt to describe what I have suffered. You know my feelings, and how dearly I love my father, you therefore can judge what I have gone through.—This dreadful event you will conclude delayed Mr. Gardner ; indeed he has evinced such tenderness and attachment to my dear father, that his own son could not have exerted himself more effectually to serve and  
attend

attend him. To Mr. Rofs and Mrs. Gordon I have equal obligations, but the dear Emma made an observation this morning that pained me.

“Sure Mr. Gardner is a mighty necessary man; but what becomes of his attachment to his sick friend in England, that he was so anxious to leave us for? I do not see his preference was so immediately necessary here.”

I made no reply. She really looks so angry and spiteful at the poor man, that I am totally at a loss to account for the strange alteration in her conduct, unless she overacts her part, and goes beyond the polite indifference I advised to disguise the real situation of her heart; however it is on her part, he certainly observes a most respectful coldness towards her.

My beloved father, since his recovery to sense and expression, is unbounded in his acknowledgments to the two gentlemen and Mrs. Gordon, for their kindness to his child,

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and attention to him. He sat up two hours this evening, and appears quite refreshed.— I have not had my clothes off since he was taken ill; now I shall try for a few hours rest.

First, let me gratefully thank heaven for the recovery of my only parent, and then I may tell you that this morning, after some hours sleep, I found my spirits more tranquillised, and my father wonderfully better. The doctor said he apprehended some violent agitations of the mind had occasioned the disorder, and I have no doubt but it was so; the severe shock he had met with, followed by the surprise and joy of our letter from London, the two extremes operating upon a mind of great sensibility, no doubt produced that dreadful disorder. I shall have a thousand apprehensions of its return on every event that may agitate his spirits.

The trial is come. Heaven direct me, what shall I do? I have a letter from Lord



Stanton that has almost broken *my* heart. I dare not shew it to my father, for *his* could not support it. Mr. Rofs, my faithful counsellor, must be consulted.

How valuable is a friend ! By the advice of Mr. Rofs, I selected such passages as were necessary, but least likely to affect him ; and, after the good man had been with him some time, I prepared to read the letter. He heard it with more fortitude than I had dared hope for ; he sighed often indeed, but was tolerably composed.

“ Write, my good Mary ; write immediately to Lord Stanton : tell him how much I thank him for his consideration of us and his ungrateful wife ; tell him we will hasten to England, and he shall direct our steps.”

In short, I have written both to him and my unhappy sister, to Mr. Cranfield and Frederic, bidding them all expect us soon in London, and requesting retired and decent apartments

apartments might be provided for us, until we should determine in what manner to dispose of ourselves.

The illness of my father having protracted Mr. Gardner's journey, his affectionate attentions have procured him the accomplishment of his wishes,—permission to accompany us.

I remonstrated strongly against it, both on a plea of decorum, and because I am apprehensive Miss Gordon will be outrageous; and, although I have had lately abundant cause to see that young lady is not what I thought her to be, yet would I studiously avoid giving her pain, or distressing her very amiable mother.

The last plea I could not bring forward to Mr. Gardner, and my father overruled the first, by saying there could be nothing indecorous when he was of the party; in short, I saw he wished to oblige Mr. Gardner, and, when I considered the possibility of

of his dreadful malady returning on the road, I felt the satisfaction of having a friend with me.

This day week is fixed on, if my father continues well, to begin our journey. The parting from Mr. Rofs and Mrs. Gordon will be very painful ;—there are but few such hearts as theirs.

I have some idea, that Mr. Gardner intends to make the former more easy in his circumstances. The old gentleman said he should feel such a void in his heart when we quitted Elgin, and his hours would pass so heavily, that he believed he must prevail on one of his daughters to return, with Mrs. Gordon, and reside with him ; though he knew such a plan would not be agreeable to either, unless he took both.

“ And why do you not, my dear sir ?” asked Mr. Gardner.

“ Because in Elgin their business will not support them, and my income is too small to maintain us all.”

“ But



"But (returned the other) could you not live with *them*?"

"What, sir! a dead burden on my children's industry, while the Almighty gives me strength to procure bread for myself?—No; in every situation some sacrifices must be made, some desired points given up, and never will I eat the bread of idleness at their expence."

"My worthy friend! (exclaimed Mr. Gardner, the feeling drop glistening in his eye,) a heart like your's can always draw consolation to itself; but I will not despair of *hearing*, perhaps of *seeing* you, wind up the close of life happy in the bosom of your family and friends."

"I thank heaven, (returned the good man,) I am not unhappy, though I have been what the world calls unfortunate, and have suffered much affliction; but time and resignation have tranquillised my mind. Riches I do not regret, and my wife and son are only at the *end* of a journey that I shall

shall shortly take, when I humbly trust we shall meet to part no more."

The cheerful tone in which those words were pronounced proved the animating hope he expressed had its foundation in piety, and a just confidence in his merciful Creator. O my dear Mrs. Rowe! what object is so truly respectable as a good man on the verge of "that undiscovered country," looking *back* without self-reproach, and *forward* with humble confidence and joy!

We were all affected, more by the manner than the words, for his countenance beamed with hope and content. My father loves him as a brother, and only the duty he conceives due to his children would have power to draw him from hence, and from a companion so congenial with his own heart.

I am called to Miss Gordon. Till now I never saw her without pleasure, but I fear she will be painfully affected, when she hears  
we

we are all going to England. I am sure I shall feel doubly the pain I inflict, and did it depend on me alone, not one sigh would I occasion to her or her mother.

I can scarcely believe I am awake, or that the scene of the last half-hour is not a vision of my brain, injurious to Miss Gordon.—Who can fathom the human heart, or trust to the deception of their senses ! but I will not anticipate.

When I entered our little parlour, Emma was walking about pretty quick. She stopped on seeing me. “ So, Miss Boyle, your secret is discovered, hidden with so much duplicity and art. *You* are going to England with Mr. Gardner, and no doubt will marry when you get there, though you were ashamed to conclude the affair here.”

“ *Ashamed !* Miss Gordon, (I repeated, all astonishment ;) permit me to say, no cause for shame is attached to any part of my conduct relative to Mr. Gardner.”

“ No



"No doubt you are all perfection, and the poor, deceived, credulous Emma is the dupe of her own fancy."

"My dear Miss Gordon, who has deceived you?"

"*You*, madam, (said she, with uncommon spirit.) Did I not confide every secret of my heart to you? and, when that insinuating man avowed his attachment for you, did you not, with artful tenderness, forth and advise me against him? at the same time that you pretended indifference, and said, "if it depended upon *you*, not a moment's uneasiness should *I* feel, and that it was more than possible you might *never* marry Mr. Gardner." All this you said to delude me, when, at the same time, you received his addresses, have engaged to go with him to England, and marry him.—Is this sincerity? is this the candour you pretend to boast of, when I have been made the victim of duplicity?"

It

It is impossible to give you an idea of the passion and spite portrayed in her features.

"Hear me, Miss Gordon, (I calmly replied;) hear me without prejudice or passion. To say I am surprised at the accusations you bring against me is little to what I feel; and were I conscious of deserving them, I should despise myself as much, or more, than you can do. But I solemnly protest, that, till very lately, I thought *you* the object of Mr. Gardner's preference."

"I had cause to believe the same, (said she, rudely interrupting me,) and then it was you employed all your arts to draw him from me."

"Fie, Miss Gordon! how do you lessen your own consequence, and increase Mr. Gardner's! But *you know* you are wrong. He told you his inducements for coming to Elgin, with which, till that day, I was equally a stranger to as yourself. He had indeed made my father his confidante, and that father has told me his future happiness depends

depends upon my acceptance of Mr. Gardner.

"I made many objections, arising from my regard for you, and I protest this moment, with the utmost sincerity, that if my marriage with that gentleman depended solely on myself, while you continued to hold such a preferable regard for him, or I could suppose it would affect your peace of mind, no self-considerations should induce me to give him my hand.

"Even now I have *not* given a decided answer to his generous proposals, for I shall not be hasty in my determinations: however great Mr. Gardner's merits may be, it requires some time to develop people's characters. I have used no arts, have been guilty of no duplicity. We had no intention of going to England with Mr. Gardner, nor a week since any thoughts of going at all.

"A family-affair of consequence obliges my father to return to London; not on Mr. Gardner's account, I assure you; and that



that gentleman obeys the calls of friendship and humanity by his intended journey.— Whether we shall ever be united, I neither affirm nor deny; nothing is concluded on, nor have I determined.

“ *Your* happiness would have great weight with me; but, if called to the test, if obliged to decide on a painful alternative, I hope Miss Gordon will think me justified in preferring the happiness of a parent beyond all other considerations, which, however interesting to my feelings, can be but secondary ones.”

“ Then you would make me believe you do not love Mr. Gardner, but only receive him because Mr. Boyle chooses not to lose a good match ?”

“ O Miss Gordon ! why will you make me blush for you ? why lessen yourself thus by petulance and injustice ?—but I am above disguise. To *you* I will confess what is unknown either to my father or Mr. Gardner, which is, that I really do decidedly esteem him,

him, and if he is what he appears to be, I shall prefer him to all others; yet would I not marry him to make one individual unhappy, were the choice mine. My father's wish to see me united to him is from a strong recommendation of his character.—Mercenary motives hold no part in his predilection; he is superior to such mean inducements.

“I have now, as ever, been candid and sincere with you. I have never deservedly forfeited your friendship; your interests have been dear to me as my own: my heart acquits me of falshood or duplicity. If you will restore me to that esteem you once professed, and which I deserve now as much as ever, you will greatly add to my happiness when I am far distant from you. If, on the contrary, you persist in your injustice, it will be a very painful recollection, but not aggravated by self-reproach.”

She was silent for a minute or two; then, rising up, “I have not your flow of words,  
Miss

Miss Boyle to mislead the senses;—mine have been but too much imposed upon; yet, notwithstanding all your roundabouts, you cannot deny the charges I bring against you, and whether you marry *the man* now or a month hence, I see no difference.

“The whole has been a *fly* concerted plan, and I am made the dupe of it. I wish you your health, madam; but our friendship, *if* it ever existed on *your* part, ends here.”

I caught her hand as she was leaving the room, very greatly affected. “Unkind, unjust, Miss Gordon! you are no longer the dear gentle Emma I admired and loved. You have assumed another character, to which you have no pretensions. Do not leave me thus, dear Emma; be just to yourself and me. If I did not esteem you, why should I profess it? If your happiness was not dear to me, why should I have incurred reproach from a parent in opposing his wishes, that I preferred Miss Gordon’s happiness



pinels to his? Dear Emma, once more consider."

"Miss Boyle, (said she, in some agitation, and withdrawing her hand,) you cannot want my friendship now, and my eyes are too well opened to be again deceived by flowery words of no meaning.—Tomorrow I go for Inverness, but I chose to tell you I have discovered all your plots, and now know what you are."

At the conclusion of this cruel speech she flew out of the room, leaving me a statue, almost petrified with astonishment and vexation.

Good heavens! what an alteration!—a transformation I should rather say; for surely the unhappy attachment she has formed has changed her nature. I am more grieved than displeased, yet who could have thought such bitterness, such a cruel recriminating spirit, dwelt in one of the most feminine forms you ever beheld.

She left me in tears, for I could not repress them any longer when she quitted the room.

My father and Mr. Rofs found me greatly agitated, and I was partly obliged to reveal the cause. Mrs. Gordon I so highly esteem; that, though it is most probable we shall meet no more, I cannot support the idea of being thought unworthily of by her. I shall write to her presently, and I trust her candour and dispassionate judgment will acquit me of having deserved the unkind treatment from Emma, which pains me to the heart.

My dearest father mends every hour in health, but a heavy melancholy oppresses him. He looks forward to our journey with equal eagerness and dread. Mr. Gardner's estates are in Berkshire. He earnestly pressed us to accept one of his houses, until we could be settled, but I firmly declined the offer, and proposed a lodging, or a cottage near Stanton-Place, for my father, as  
I was

I was determined to go down into Wales, and see my unhappy sister.

This is to be decided upon on our arrival in London. Ah ! how I wish you could meet us there !

My beloved parent's illness so entirely occupied every thought, and engaged every moment, that even the *cause* from whence it originated but slightly occurred to me ; now, partly relieved from the terrifying apprehensions that engrossed me, the situation of Lord and Lady Stanton returns in full force to my recollection.

It is too true, my dear Mrs. Rowe, that I had many uneasy doubts upon my mind ; that *there were* circumstances that alarmed me, and that my letters for some time past to my sister had been letters of admonition. You will pardon my reserve on this subject I am sure. Not a thought of my heart, relative to myself, was ever concealed from you ; but to call in question



the propriety of a sister's conduct, in which a noble and worthy family were so intimately concerned, was a point of extreme delicacy, and impeded that confidence which otherwise you were so well entitled to receive.

Alas ! I depended but too much on her good sense and my influence. Neither has had sufficient weight to preserve her from the delusive intoxicating snares of vanity, and the artful machinations of a worthless man. She is now fallen indeed from the summit of her wishes, from rank and admiration, to endure the loss of her husband's affections, the contempt of the malicious world, and *self-reproach* ! the most poignant of all afflictions in the hour of solitude.

The gay throng that followed her, now think of her no more, or, if her name is mentioned, it is in the most mortifying humiliating terms by the men, and by the females of fashion with an exulting mixture

ture of scorn and pity, that degrades her beyond the lowest of her sex; aggravated by the triumph of many who envied her advantages, and who are as truly contemptible in their conduct as herself, only they have *escaped detection*.

O my poor unhappy sister ! Lord Stan-  
ton has taken a method more effectual to  
humble and distress her, than if dismissed  
or divorced. Left to her own reflections,  
without any variety to amuse her mind,  
how painful must be her situations ! How  
can she meet the eye of her much-injured  
lord, and not shrink like the snail into its  
shell, unable to bear the piercing dart !

I wish, yet dread, to see her. It is *now*  
that she shall find a friend who will not  
desert or reproach her ; and may that faith-  
ful friend reconcile her to herself by peni-  
tence and future rectitude !

I broke off here, for the subject grew too  
oppressive. I have written to, and received

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an

answer from, Mrs. Gordon,—a very affectionate one, that has much relieved my mind. She apologizes for her daughter's injustice, and “hopes in a little time, by removing from the cause of it, to do away the prejudice Miss Gordon has taken up, she is sure, very unjustly, against a young lady *she* shall ever esteem.” She kindly condescends to solicit my correspondence, and concludes with cordial good wishes for my father's health.

This letter has afforded me an infinity of pleasure. Mrs. Gordon is so truly amiable a character, so good and unoffending, that it would always have been a subject of regret to me had I left her with an ill impression of my conduct.

Could her dear deceived daughter look into my heart, she might be convinced of what I have more than once asserted, that I was capable of any *sacrifices* to insure her happiness, had *I* been alone concerned; and that, should it be my fate. to marry  
Mr.



Mr. Gardner, her restored tranquillity will be an essential point with me, previous to such an union taking place.

My father thinks this an over-strained, a *romantic*, delicacy. I should be sorry to incur the imputation, the folly, of eccentricity : an affected singularity is generally wrong ; but indeed, my opinions on this point are the result of serious consideration, not lightly taken up, but on which I think much of my future felicity must depend ; therefore I trust, *if I am* singular, I may be forgiven.

I shall now close this packet. You will hear from me on our arrival at Glasgow, where we shall spend a day with the good Macniel family. I shall leave Elgin with regret. I had begun to like the situation extremely, and looked forward to passing years of tranquillity in this retirement.

The dear and respectable Mr. Rofs, whom I love as a second father, *he* feels little

little less than ourselves on this separation,—most probably for ever. His advanced age, and the great distance between us, preclude all hopes of a second-meeting in this world; may we recognize each other in the regions of eternal bliss, where *he* will receive the reward of many virtues, the strict performance of religious and social duties, and a cheerful submission to the divine will, “and may *my* last end be like *his* !”

Heaven blefs you, and all you love !—  
Ever, my dear Mrs. Rowe,

Your affectionate

MARY BOYLE.

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LETTER

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LETTER XII.

EARL STANTON TO BEVIL GARDNER,

WHERE are you, dear Gardner?—  
Are you immersed in the follies of  
the great world, or, what is more likely,  
are you retired to the shades of some unfrequented spot, to ruminate on the depravity of human nature?—ample scope for a reflecting mind like your's.

I wrote



I wrote to you on the day I quitted Bath; a few concise lines informed you of my situation and future designs:—to this I have received no answer, nor had a single line of your's reached me for some time before.

I should be alarmed for any man but yourself. Sickness is not very likely to assail a temperate methodical mortal like you, and, as to frolic and dissipation, it is impossible either should lead you astray out of the direct road you have chalked for yourself.

If you have not quitted this turbulent world for the land of spirits, pray let me hear from you without delay. I never more wanted your presence or correspondence. It is now that a friend should step in to administer consolation, or divert the sorrow and chagrin that oppresses my mind. I told you in two lines that Lady Stanton has repaid my tenderness and confidence with

with infamy and ingratitude. Yes, Gardner, she is lost to me for ever ! but she shall not be the property of another.

From the moment I first saw her, I adored her ; from the hour she became my wife, my whole soul has been devoted to her alone ; from the gay frivolous mortal you laughed at and sometimes reproached, I became a tender husband, a domestic man, and fought to recover lost time, and improve the little reason nature had given me.

Ah ! Gardner, what are now my inducements to persevere in my studies ?—Your friendship and my sister's affection is all the good that is left me. Forgive me, if I say that the aching void in my heart convinces me that nothing can compensate for what has been torn from me by a base and worthless wretch,—the affection of my wife ; for sure I *once* possessed it :—

she

she could not at first be all artifice and duplicity.

I am now become a jailer ; — yes, a jailer ! I keep watch day and night over Lady Stanton. Ten days we have been at the abbey, and not twenty words have passed between us.

Her bed and dressing rooms are large, and not unpleasant ; but she has no society ; — a few books only, such as may tend to instruct, not to *divert*. her mind ; her dress clean, if she pleases, but plain in the extreme ; our table perfectly correspondent.

Two women-servants and one man are our only attendants within doors. The keys of the gallery, leading to the suite of apartments inhabited only by us, are always in my possession, and every possibility of escape is barred up.

What a life for me, — for her ! yet I cannot meet the world. Whether I have



more sensibility, more affection for an ungrateful woman, or less resolution than the many whose fate is similar to mine, I know not ; but *I* feel degraded, and cannot support the laugh of coxcombs or the licentious tongues of libertines.

-Ah ! my friend, how has my eye misled my judgment ! Lady Stanton's superior beauty, her wit, and vivacity, made me her slave.

I saw, and acknowledged, her sister's superior merit. She was, I confess, more than agreeable ; she was indeed interesting, elegant, sensible, and estimable, in every sense of the word ; but when Caroline, my once-beloved Caroline appeared, so transcendently beautiful and lovely, it was impossible to consider for a moment any other object but her.

Who, my dear Gardner, could suppose such a form had a depraved heart,

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or

or that a casket so ornamented contained dross of no value?

Bear with me, Bevil, for I am *more* than half distracted! But away with reflections, for they avail nothing.

Sullenness and a reserved haughty air have hitherto marked her displeasure. Yesterday I thought she looked pale, and more *thoughtful* than fullen. What did I not feel of revived tenderness and pity at the moment! how difficult to suppress my emotions!

She declined coming to supper. This morning she eat little or nothing. I took no notice, when I called in to attend her to the dining-room. All our necessary apartments being on the same floor, she rose, and followed me; but, when seated, she refused to eat any thing more than a crust of bread.

I remonstrated with an affected indifference: she coolly replied, that "she had  
no

no appetite," and, after sitting a short time, retired to her own room.

I am curfedly uneasy ; perhaps confine-  
ment may injure her health, or she may  
have taken up a resolution to destroy it  
by refusing nourishment. Either way I  
must feel myself the cause of destroying or  
undermining her constitution.

I cannot bear this idea ; yet neither will  
I change my plan ; for the present, at  
least, I will not. I hourly expect to hear  
from Mr. or Miss Boyle. It was very  
painful for me to wound them with such  
baneful intelligence, for they are good and  
worthy : they deserve not the reproach of  
such a shameless relation.

Pr'ythee, dear Gardner, if nothing par-  
ticular impedes you, come to me ; if but  
for a week come. Should any material  
circumstances preclude me that happiness,  
then write :—write without delay, and say  
something.



256 WOMEN AS THEY ARE.

something to calm the turbulent and contending passions that at present distract my breast.

In every situation I am most sincerely

Your's,

STANTON.

END OF VOL. III.





